



**INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO
DE VIANA DO CASTELO**

PROSPECTS FOR SPORTS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE CASPIAN REGION

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I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends, to whom I am extremely grateful for their support.

JURY

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ABSTRACT

Azerbaijan is a country rich in natural, cultural and built heritage with potential to become an appealing tourism destination. This heritage richness is also found in the Caspian region where improved infrastructure could turn it into an ideal destination for sports tourism, particularly water-based. However, just because it has rich natural and cultural heritage and infrastructure for pursuing this type of tourism does not mean that the Caspian region has been successful in developing this tourism potential. The Caspian region has not focused on the sports tourism product because of the low number of facilities and organized activities in the region. However, this product is argued to present considerable potential due to fast changes taking place in Azerbaijan, including the building of new infrastructure and facilities. Furthermore, no research has taken place on the development of sports tourism in this region. This dissertation is a pioneer study on this specific form of tourism in Azerbaijan and the Caspian Region.

The dissertation aims to determine the current situation and identify ways of developing sports tourism in the Caspian region. Online research was conducted for obtaining secondary data on available resources and infrastructure. Results suggest that considerable attention needs to be given by tourism planners if sports tourism in the Caspian region is to flourish. This study is expected to draw attention to the need for an innovative approach to tourism development in Azerbaijan and more particularly to sports tourism in the Caspian region.

KEYWORDS: tourism product, sports tourism, Caspian region, Azerbaijan

RESUMO

Azerbaijão é um país rico em património natural e cultural. Predispõe características para se tornar um destino turístico atraente. Esta riqueza também é encontrada na região Cáspia onde o melhoramento de estruturas poderia transformar a região em um destino ideal para turismo desportivo, particularmente de desportos de água. Mesmo assim, com este potencial não quer dizer que a região tem tido sucesso em aproveitar as possibilidades ao máximo. A região Cáspia não tem apostado no produto de turismo desportivo devido ao baixo número de instalações e actividades organizados na região. No entanto, é argumentado que este produto poderá apresentar um potencial considerável tendo em conta evoluções rápidas a decorrerem no Azerbaijão, incluindo a construção de novas infraestruturas e instalações. Além disto, nenhuma pesquisa tem sido feita no âmbito do turismo desportivo no que diz respeito a esta região. Esta dissertação é um estudo pioneiro nesta forma de turismo em Azerbaijão e a região Cáspia.

A dissertação tem como objectivo determinar a situação actual e identificar as formas de desenvolver turismo desportivo na região Cáspia. Foi feita pesquisa na internet para obter dados secundários acerca de recursos e infraestruturas. Os resultados indicam que uma atenção considerável será necessária para o turismo desportivo florescer na região. Este estudo espera chamar atenção para a necessidade de uma aproximação mais inovadora no desenvolvimento de turismo no Azerbaijão e mais especificamente o turismo desportivo na região Cáspia.

Palavras-chave: produto turístico, turismo desportivo, Região Cáspia, Azerbaijão

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ABBREVIATIONS

(AITF)	Azerbaijan International Tourism Fair
(AR)	Azerbaijan Republic
(AZN)	Azerbaijani Manat
(AZAL)	Azerbaijan Airlines
(BP)	British Petroleum
(GDP)	Gross Domestic Product
(GNP)	Gross National Product
(IOC)	International Olympic Committee
(MCT)	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
(MYS)	Ministry of Youth and Sport
(NSPESD)	National Strategy on Physical Education and Sport Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan
(PD)	Product development
(UK)	United Kingdom
(USA)	United States of America
(USD)	United States Dollar
(WTO)	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the subject, the reason and motivation for this research. This is followed by an introduction to the theoretical background regarding the issues of tourism as a development strategy and reviews the origins of the concepts, approaches and definitions relating to sports tourism development. The literature review is followed by the presentation of the aims and objectives and the research method is explained. Finally, the chapter is concluded by a description of the structure of the study.

1.2 Reasons for and motivations for the research

This dissertation will take the Caspian region of Azerbaijan as an exploratory study area to determine the potential of sports tourism, particularly related to water sports. It is argued that sports tourism can yield a variety of benefits for the region. However, no research has taken place on the development of sports tourism and it is suggested that this research could be a sum-up for future research on sports tourism in the Caspian region.

The researcher decided on this topic considering her interests and concerns for the development of her native country and region. There is a general lack of information on tourism in the Caspian region, and more particularly on sports tourism. As a result, the researcher confronted difficulties in obtaining published research, dissertations or thesis on this topic. With the successful completion of this study and master degree, the researcher intends to collaborate with the Azerbaijan Tourism Institute in the future, possibly through a series of seminars. This dissertation will be the basis for the collaboration.

1.3 Theoretical background

Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Mullin et al, 2000:56). On the other hand, sport is often narrowly associated with competitive play involving concepts of time, space, and formalized rules (Mullin et al, 2000:56). Thus, sports tourism bring together sport and tourism. While these two sectors of our society and economy have different natures, values and organizational structures, it is proposed that they offer potential partnering opportunities.

According to Keller (2002), travel and sporting events are both helping to make the world a smaller place. Tourism is busy opening up the last few relatively unexplored areas of the world. Visitors make very similar demands on tourism facilities and services no matter where they find themselves on this planet. Today's sports events and competitions can be organized anywhere, regardless of national boundaries. No matter how remote the venue, the mass media is able to bring it into the comfort of the home, for the benefit of potential spectators around the globe.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) promote growth and development on a world-wide scale in their respective fields. Their efforts ensure that such development takes place with as little disruption as possible. Their rules and statutes make it binding on both organizations to work for greater understanding and peace among the peoples of the world. Sports bring people together (WTO, 2003). In the statutory article outlining the purpose of the organization, the WTO expressly states that it must promote tourism in the pursuit of meta-economic goals and in the interest of development, international understanding and peace.

Today's tourism would be unthinkable without sport. Sports tourism is increasingly

fashionable. It would be erroneous to think that sport has not also obtained many benefits from tourism (Scarrott, 1999:78). Sporting events often involve travel and spending time away from the work-a-day world. Moreover sports events generally do not take place without some kind of touristic support. They often depend to a great extent on a tourism destination. Even so, tourism and sport are increasingly developing in different directions. Autonomous sport and tourism systems are being created as a result of growing specialization and professionalization.

However, not enough use is made of the synergies that exist between the two systems. Thanks to this First World Conference on Sport and Tourism an effort is at last being made to harness the potential for co-operation more efficiently and to work together to solve problems that are common to both types of endeavor. We shall thus be making a substantial contribution to world development (Maier and Weber, 1993:56). Sport with its emphasis on competition and performance and tourism which is about emotional experience and fun, are two increasingly specialized systems, which are nonetheless mutually dependent. Tourism needs sport for the development and marketing of products. And sport would have a hard time without tourism, for it is tourism that helps to develop entirely new types of sport and a great many tourists remain devoted to existing sports disciplines (Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992:287).

1.4 The aim and objectives of the research

Azerbaijan is a country rich in natural and cultural heritage with the potential to be transformed into tourism attractions and consequently into an emerging tourism destination. This heritage is also found in the Caspian region where existing infrastructure could turn it into an ideal destination for sports tourism, particularly through water sports. However, just because it has rich natural and cultural heritage and possibly the infrastructure for pursuing this type of tourism, does not mean that the Caspian Region has been successful in developing its tourism potential. Furthermore, no research has taken place on the development of sports tourism in this region. This is a pioneer study that it is expected to draw attention

to alternative approaches to tourism development in Azerbaijan and more particularly the Caspian region.

Considering existing infrastructure, attractions and the importance of tourism for the region's economy, the aim of this study is to study the current situation of the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan as a sports tourism destination. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives are proposed.

Objective 1: Analyze and evaluate the existing supply of sports tourism.

Objective 2: Identify the prospects for sports tourism development.

Objective 3: Propose recommendations for further research of sports tourism.

1.5 Research methodology

Choosing appropriate research methods or techniques is clearly vital (Veal, 1997:47). The overall perspective adopted by this study is to recognize that the development process takes place within a particular context and is designed to achieve particular outputs and outcomes.

This research will adopt an exploratory approach for understanding the prospects for sports tourism development in the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan. The Business Dictionary defines exploratory research as investigation into a problem or situation, usually through the use of a variety of methods, which provides insights to the researcher, particularly in situations where a small amount of information exists. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/exploratory-research.html>).

The case study will be based on online search. Online search helps to identify sources of information to gather existing data and analyze the data.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured in six chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction to the main topic of this research, describing the theoretical background, reasons and motivations of the research, research aims and objectives, research methodology and the organization of the dissertation. Chapter two presents a literature review on sports tourism, the link between sport and tourism, sports tourism from the demand and supply point of views and what comprises a tourism product. Chapter three explains the methodology of this study and a description of the research. The fourth chapter presents the general characteristics, historical background and situation of tourism in Azerbaijan and the Caspian region. The fifth chapter is comprised of the results of the online research. Finally, chapter six is dedicated to the major findings and the exploration of possibilities for the sports tourism product in the Caspian region, limitations of this research and recommendations for future research.

1.7 Summary

In this introductory chapter, attention is paid to the topic and objectives of the research, followed by a general overview of sports tourism, the reasons and motivations of the research, the research method applied and the structure of the dissertation. The following chapter is comprised of a thorough review of the body of literature on concepts related to sport tourism.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ON SPORTS TOURISM

2.1 Introduction

Tourism and sport are key elements of today's culture and have a specific influence on the behavior of society. Sport and tourism can in different ways contribute to each other's development (Weed and Bull, 2004:22). Weed and Bull (2004:22) describe how the tourism industry can help evolve local sport facilities or giving communities the opportunity to create them where that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Also tourism can benefit from sport because a lot of sport activities take place during holidays. Sports tourism not only showcases the sporting abilities of athletes, but can also highlight the tourism experiences of a destination. In this context, this chapter defines sports tourism, discusses the evolution of sport tourism and focuses on the characteristics of sport tourists and its benefits for a tourism destination. Furthermore, it is presented the global picture of sports tourism and its impact on tourism development by explaining what motivates tourists and sport tourists to travel and the benefits of hosting a sporting event.

2.2 Defining Sports tourism

The WTO (2003:33) defines tourism as "comprising the activities of persons traveling to and outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Page and Connell (2006:1) state that tourism is a global phenomenon that has grown rapidly since 1945, and that has always been part of the human experience. Green and Chalip (1998:275) observe that the spirit of travel has lived on down the ages and that people have constantly searched for new places and new experiences. Although part of the human experience, tourism has evolved and has taken on new perspectives, moving away from the traditional sun-and-sea focus to become more development focused. Green and Chalip (1998:276) further stipulate that this is demonstrated through changes within transportation through the ages, as well as technological

and socio-economic transformation, which have enabled people to experience the benefits of travel.

Sport, in itself, is defined in various ways and from different perspectives. For example, in North America, the terminology of sport is often narrowly associated with competitive play involving concepts of time, space, and formalized rules (Mullin et al, 2000). Other definitions (Crockett, 1997), however, provide more comprehensive interpretations incorporating noncompetitive elements such as recreation and health. The popular international slogan “Sport for All” refers to one’s personal engagement in any physical activity, be it passive, such as walking, or highly active, such as playing competitive basketball (Palm, 1991:91). The word sport is, in fact, a derivative of disport, which means to divert oneself. The word sport carries the original implication of people diverting their attention from the rigors and pressures of everyday life (Griffiths, 1999). Although escape for diversion purposes may still be a motivation for a sport activity, sport today employs a far more engaging concept, encompassing both spectators and participants who seek fulfillment of a wide variety of human needs and wants.

Sport tourism – the bringing together of sport and tourism – is a fairly new concept, and as a result, it is expected that organizational structures for sport tourism will continue to evolve as communities adjust their organizational models to meet their needs. While these two sectors of our society and economy have different natures, values and organizational structures, they offer tremendous partnering opportunities (Deery et al, 2004:235).

Tourism and sport industries cater for travelers who seek sport experiences (Hinch and Higham, 2004:15). Loy et al, (1978:3) define sport as a game occurrence approach, which conceptualizes sport as a subset of institutionalized games that require physical prowess. Sport is governed by rules that are linked to a specific time and space of a sport event. The rules of a sport event can be manifested in a variety of ways, such as the play area, duration and pacing of the sport event. Rules can also be more specific, particularly as the level of competition increases

(Nash, 1999:701). Sport can also be defined as goal-orientated, competitive and contest-based and these three areas are closely related (Nash, 1999:702).

The links between sport and tourism have expanded considerably, and become more clearly defined, in recent years (Gibson, 1998). The latter part of the twentieth century witnessed the rapid development of sport and tourism (Redmond, 1991:107). Both now stand among the largest and fastest growing industries in the global economy. Sport and tourism have achieved mass participation in the post-war years and in many cases, participation in sport and tourism takes place simultaneously (Higham and Hinch, 1999:87). This process has created new links between the sport and tourism sectors (Glyptis, 1991:165). Indeed, the resource and infrastructural requirements of sport and tourism are often shared (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999). These include natural environments, constructed facilities, transport, services and hospitality. This shared foundation suggests the likelihood that developments in sport will affect the tourism sector, and vice versa.

A comprehensive definition of sport tourism provided by Standeven and De Knop (1999:12) is “all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality”.

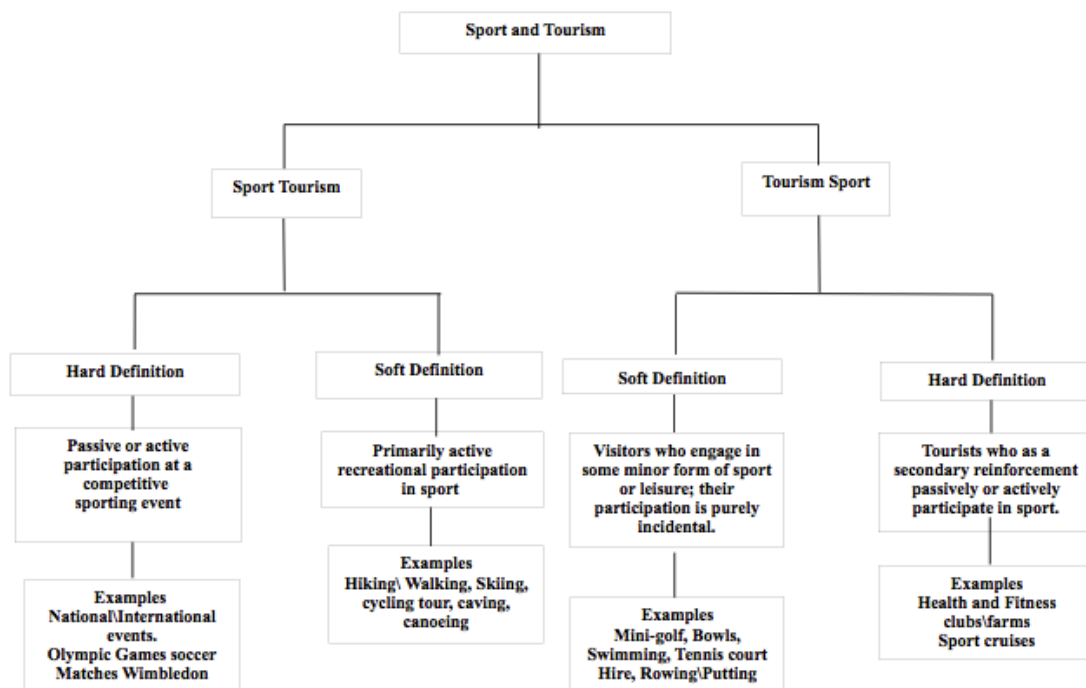
Their definition encompasses all necessary components and has been used by many researchers. They state that the sport activity can range from a mega event (such as the Olympic Games) to a local or community event. The sport activity involves traveling away from the usual place of residence or work to attend the event. Turco et al (2002:3) provide a simple concise definition that “includes travel to and participation in or attendance at a predetermined sport activity” and can be either competitive, entertainment, educational and recreational.

Sport is an important activity within tourism and tourism is a fundamental

characteristic of sport (Hinch and Highman, 2001:45). These two concepts, when existing together in a tourism destination, have to be managed as one in order to maximize the destination image. Sport investments and sporting events tend to enhance the overall awareness of a city for tourists interested in attending sporting events and also for other tourists who might also consider visiting (Bramwell, 1997:13). The relationship between sport and tourism is evident and can no longer be seen as separate.

The type of events or activities and whether they are primarily linked to the tourism or sport experience can be used as criteria for further dividing sports tourism. Gammon and Robinson's (2003:24) study examined this concept by using the categories of hard and soft sport tourism and hard and soft tourism sport. Their framework asserts that "if, for example the prime motivation is in sport, then the touristic element would act as a secondary reinforcement, and vice versa if tourism was the main point of interest" (Gammon and Robinson, 2003:22).

Figure 1. Gammon and Robinson's diagram 'A consumer classification of sport and tourism'.



Source: Gammon and Robinson, (2003:23)

Chalip and Leyns (2003:133) point out that an event destination provides attractions that bring visitors to an event and that attract them to extend their stay beyond the period of the actual event. The extension of the sport visitor or tourist's stay can be achieved through visiting alternative attractions prior to or after the sport event.

In De Knop's (1987) earlier writing on the topic, a sport tourist is defined as an individual who participates in sport while on holiday. In 1990, De Knop identified three types of active sport vacations, namely the pure sport vacation, such as a trip to go skiing; taking advantage of sport facilities at a holiday destination, although sport may not be the primary purpose of the trip; and the private sport vacation, where tourists take part in non-organized sport activities such as beach cricket. Similarly, Higham and Hinch (2003:25) stipulate that sports tourism can be one of three categories of attractions (see table 1).

Table 1: Explanation of three categories of attractions.

Primary attractions	can influence visitors' decision to travel. For example, as a primary attraction, event participants visit a host destination primarily for the event.
Secondary attractions	are normally known to prospective visitors prior to their visit and, therefore, play a critical role in any decision regarding their travel itinerary. In these circumstances, travelers know about sport activities or sport events prior to their arrival at the destination; however, their focus will be on other attractions such as human-made, natural or cultural attractions.
Tertiary attractions	are not known to travelers prior to their visit, but could serve as a centre of entertainment or activity once they reach their destination; hence travelers might not be aware of a sport tourism attraction prior to their visit, but when they arrive at the destination, they could be informed of the event and might want to attend or participate in the event .

Source: Higham and Hinch, 2003:27

The authors further suggest that recognition of linkages between sport and tourism will assist decision makers in sport tourism event strategy and sport tourism event policy in making sport tourism ventures more successful (p. 28).

Similar to the three categories of attractions, which are discussed by Higham and Hinch (2003), Weed and Bull (2004:124) also divide sport tourism into different categories. Their categories are tourism with sport content, sport participation tourism, sport training and sport events.

Table 2: Sport tourism categories

Category	Description
Tourism with sport content	Within this context, sport is not the primary focus and purpose for travelling. In this instance, tourism involves sport as an incidental activity rather than a prime focus for traveling and can be regarded as a tertiary attraction (Weed and Bull, 2004:124)
Sport participation tourism	Sport participation tourism refers to sport vacations and comprises the remainder of multi-sport or single-sport participation tourism, Only a few providers in this section land to be from the commercial sector. In this instance, sport tourism will be the primary attraction (Weed and Bull, 2004:127).
Sport training	Sport training trips, where the primary purpose is sport instruction or some form of training, can be provided by the commercial and public sector. The public sectors will often be for elite athletes. Sport training can range from a weekend instruction course for beginners to an elite training camp for a national athletics learn. This can also be considered as the primary attraction (Weed and Bull, 2004:130)
Sport events	Turco et al. (2002:6) state that sport tourism events are contents and activities that sport tourists visit to participate in, organize, officiate at or observe. These are the most common types of sport activities for sport tourists. Weed and Bull (2004:131) assert that provision may be made by the commercial or public sector or by a partnership of the two and that, in most instances, sport organizations are involved. This can be considered both a tertiary attraction and a primary attraction.

Source: adapted from Weed and Bull, (2004:124)

As illustrated in table 2, these categories have almost the same belongs and influences to each other. As mentioned earlier, tourism with sport content and sport events can be considered as tertiary attractions; but sport participation tourism, sport training and also sport events can be considered as primary attractions.

2.2.1 Types of sport tourists

In the previous section, it was shown that sports tourism is not a simple combination of sport and tourism. Definitions of sports tourism and the sport tourist vary according to their characteristics, complexity and different perspectives. For

example, Reeves (1998, cited in Hinch and Higham, 2004:14) presents a different kind of description of sport tourists. He identifies six different visitor types, which are divided into: incidental, sporadic, occasional, regular, dedicated and driven (see table 3).

Table 3: Sport tourism types and visitor profiles

Type	Decision-making	Participation	Non-participation	Group profile	Lifestyle	Spending
Incidental	Unimportant	Out of duty	Not relaxing, Holiday like	Family	Sport is significant	Minimal
Sporadic	Relative important	If convenient	Easily contained/put off	Friends and family	Non-essential	Minimal excepts for "one-offs"
Occasional	Sometimes determining	Welcome addition to tourist experience	Other commitments	Often individual, especially business tourist	Conspicuous consumption	High on occasions
Regular	Important	Significant part of enjoyment	Money or time become prohibitive	Group or individual	Important	Considerable
Dedicated	Very important	Central to experience	Due to unforeseen barriers	Individuals and groups of the like-minded	Defining element	Extremely high and consistent
Driven	Very important, but little autonomy	Sole reason	Through injury or fear of it	Elite groups or solitary	The profession	Extremely high but funded by others

Source: Reeves (1998) cited in Hinch and Higham, (2004:14)

Industry experts agree that awareness of market segmentation is one of the foundation stones of a successful sports tourism strategy. Without knowledge of the character and requirements of each segment, a destination cannot understand where best to position its offer to acquire the benefits it seeks, nor what elements that offer must include to maximize those gains (Reeves, 1998 cited in Hinch and Higham, 2004:15). Other scholars, including Standevan and DeKnop (1999), identify 2 categories of sports tourists:

- travel to take part
- travel to watch

Travel to take part is travel for the purpose of participating in a sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activity. But, travel to watch is travel for the purpose of watching sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activities and events (Standevan and DeKnop (1999)).

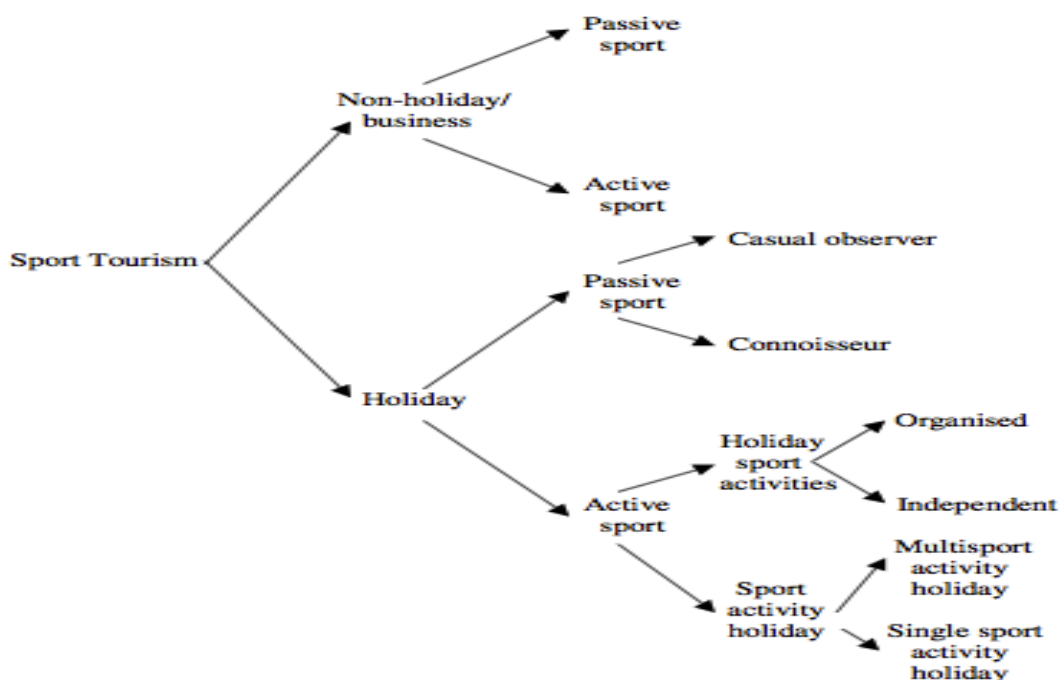
Gibson (2002) adds to the three distinct categories and describes them as follows:

- Active sports tourists
- Event sports tourists
- Nostalgia sports tourists

Active sports tourist overlaps with participation sports tourism, where the traveler is actively participating in the sport, either in a professional or in an amateur way. Standevan and DeKnop (1999) again divides active sports tourists into three types of activity: the pure sports tourist (master games, sporting tournaments), the incidental sports tourist (such as competitive beach games), and the private sports tourist (such as playing a game of tennis). Certain aspects of active sports tourism could be debated as not being sports tourism at all, as it includes a vast number of non-competitive physical activities. Event sports tourist includes who is coming for large scale events, such as the Olympic Games, but also other smaller scale events, which aid the development of sport and infrastructure of smaller destinations. Nostalgia sports tourist overlaps Weed's 3rd category. Tourists also travel to visit sport halls of fame and museums, and also famous sporting stadia or facilities. Another kind of tourists are coming could be sport theme vacations on cruise ships or at resorts with sporting professionals (Gibson, 2002:33).

The following figure shows the types of sport tourism.

Figure 2: Types of Sport Tourism



Source: Standeven and De Knop (1999:12)

At first, the authors (Standeven and De Knop) make the distinction between sports tourism with non-holiday or holiday purposes. After that, the authors distinguish between active or passive sport tourists. Passive sport tourists are grouped according to how important sport is during their trip. Casual observers are less involved in sports than connoisseurs who like to visit sports events or sport museums.

Tourists who are involved in sports at a destination are so because of different reasons. It could be that they like a certain degree of dedication, competition or personal achievement. Because of this reason the sport tourism market has often been described as 'niche' markets or special 'demand groups' (Gibson et al, 1998). Furthermore, Delpy (1997:23) states 'a travel market focused entirely on participating or watching sport is a unique and exciting concept'.

The distinction between physical participation and spectatorship has led. Many authors to describe different levels of tourist engagement in participants and spectator sports. An example is the theory of Hall (1992:142). Hall identified two

types of active sport tourist: 'activity participants', who regard their participation as a medium of self-expression, and 'players', who are competitive in their participation. The passive sports tourists do not pursue any individual sports activity. The focus of this group lies with big sports events and distinguished sport sites.

The active sports tourist participates in a sporting activity while on holidays. These include activities such as golf, tennis, skiing, fishing, scuba diving and mountain biking. Active sport tourists may engage in sport activity holidays, where sport is the main intention of the trip, or in holiday sport activities, where sport is incidental (Gibson, 1998:134). Gibson et al (1998:169) conducted research to assess the patterns of active sport tourists throughout their lives. The research found that as people aged they were less likely to be involved in active sport tourism. Realizing this relationship between active sport tourists and age enables marketers to recognize who their target market is. Passive sports tourist encompasses spectating at an event or visiting sport museums, sport facilities, halls of fame, sport theme parks or stadiums (Ritchie and Adair, 2002:5). Passive sports tourists might travel to a particular destination specifically to experience sport but it may also be that they have travelled to experience broader tourism products with the inclusion of some sport activities. This may simply be an additional part of their tourism activities while at a destination.

2.3 Global picture of sports tourism

Global shaping of sports and tourism has contributed to the recognition of sports tourism as a growing economic segment. Tourism is not what it was a century ago and sport today is absolutely different to the past. Infrastructural, technological, economic, political developments across the globe are and will continue to make sports tourism an important sector. The two concepts (sport and tourism) contribute to the existence of sport tourism. This can be endorsed by activities, which sport and tourism provides (travel, tourism and participation) Standeven and DeKnop (1999:22). Standeven and DeKnop (1999:39) advance that "unparallel

growth of sport and tourism has taken place this century and the period is characterized by social diffusion and the development of mass tourism and mass sport. Contextualized by the democratization that has taken place in society, sport tourism has become a prevalent and growing phenomenon".

Sports tourism is recognized as one of the fastest growing segments within the tourism industry (Getz, 1991:88). The Olympic Games, the world's most famous event, is an example of a mega sport tourism event. In the world of sport, events can range from a local basketball tournament to professional games. Sports tourism events have the potential to capture the attention of spectators and to engage them in the excitement of the event (Wheaton, 2004). The same author suggests that events further provide an opportunity for the destination to leverage tourism-development potential, to provide opportunities for local business to leverage economic opportunities and to provide unique opportunities to engage local communities in entrepreneurship. It further creates opportunities to build on the development of education and training in the fields of sport, tourism and events as a sub-sector of sports tourism.

Global perspectives: the increasing proliferation of new international events serves as an indication of the significance of the sports event tourism market. Factors that influence this trend include a desire of the media to cover new, exciting events; investments of sponsors who utilize sponsorship to reach their consumers; and competition among destinations to attract events (Getz, 1998).

According to Swart (1998), globally, several destinations have incorporated sports tourism into their national marketing plans. Such destinations include the United States of America (USA), Malaysia, China, Ireland, Thailand, Korea, Nepal, Barbados, Brunei, Portugal and Australia. Swart further notes that in the USA, more than 2570 cities have actively engaged in attracting sport events to their area, while most of these cities have commissioned the formation of a sport authority to deal with both bidding to host new events and existing events.

The importance of sports tourism as a target market is further emphasized by media statements of the World Tourism Organization (WTO 2003) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC 2004), which announced their commitment to reinforce their partnerships on collaboration in the sports and tourism domain. They stated that “tourism and sport are interrelated and complementary” and that “both are powerful forces for development, stimulating investment in infrastructure projects such as airports, roads, stadiums, sporting complexes and restaurant projects that can be enjoyed by the local population as well as tourists who come to use them” (WTO, 2003:84).

2.4 Characteristics of the tourism product

The tourism product is a very complex concept and there are two different dimensions for understanding the tourism product. The first dimension presents the tourism product as one whole set components, which together make up the complete experience of the visitor. The second one defines tourism products as separate services, which are delivered by a variety of businesses. Any individual product is composed of a series of elements or processes that combine to satisfy the purchasers needs (Middleton and Clarke, 2001). As far as the tourists are concerned, the product covers the complete experience from the time he leaves home to the time or returns to it, the touristic product is to be considered as an amalgam of three main components of attractions, facilities at the destination and accessibility of the destination. The same authors argue that the first component, the attractions and environment, are the driving motive which influences the customer’s destination choice the most. They grouped the components into the following four types of attractions:

- Natural attractions: Landscapes, seascape, beaches, climate, flora and fauna and other geographical features of the destination and its natural resources.
- Built attractions: buildings and tourism infrastructure including historical and modern architecture, monuments, promenades, parks and gardens, convention centers, marinas, ski slopes, industrial archaeology, managed visitor attractions generally, golf, specialty shops and theme retail areas.
- Cultural attractions: history and folklore, religion and art, theatre, dance and other

entertainment and museums, some of these may be developed into special events, festivals and pageants.

- Social attractions: way of life and customs of resident or host population, language and opportunities for social encounters (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

Middleton and Clarke argue that a tourism product can be defined as the sum of the physical and psychological satisfaction it provides to tourists during their travelling *en route* to the destination. The tourist product focuses on facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourist. It can be seen as a composite product, as the sum total of a country's tourist attractions, transport, and accommodation and of entertainment which result in customer satisfaction. The authors further state that each of the components of a tourist product is supplied by individual providers of services like hotel companies, airlines, travel agencies, etc. and that the tourist product can be analyzed in terms of its attraction, accessibility, amenity and accommodation (p. 57) (see table 4).

Table 4: Tourist product

Attractions	of the three basic components of a tourist product, attractions are very important. Unless there is an attraction, the tourist will not be motivated to go to a particular place. Attractions are those elements in a product which determine the choice made by particular tourist to visit one particular destination rather than another. Tourist demands are also very much susceptible to changes in fashion. Fashion is an important factor in the demand for various tourist attractions and amenities.
Accessibility	Tourist attractions of whatever type would be of little importance if their locations are inaccessible by the normal means of transport. A Tourist in order to get to his destination needs some mode of transport. This mode may be a motor car, a coach, an airplane, a ship or a train which enables him to reach his predetermined destination. If tourist destinations are located at places where no transport can reach or where there are inadequate transport facilities, they become of little value. The tourist attractions, which are located near the tourist-generating markets, are linked by a network of efficient means of transport.
Accommodation	Accommodation plays a central role and is very basic to tourist destinations. World Tourism Organization in its definition of a tourist has stated that he must spend at least one night in the destination visited, to qualify as a tourist. This presupposes availability of some kind of accommodation. The demand for accommodation away from one's home is met by a variety of facilities.
Amenities	facilities are a necessary aid to the tourist center. For a sea-side resort, facilities like swimming, boating, yachting, surf-riding, and other facilities like dancing, recreation and other amusements are important for every tourist center. (Fleischer, 2005:63)

Source: Middleton and Clarke, (2001)

The attractions could be cultural, like sites and areas of archaeological interest, historical buildings and monuments, flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountains, national parks or events like trade fairs, exhibitions, arts and music festivals, games, etc. Natural resources are frequently the key elements in a destination's attraction. Examples include: countryside; climate-temperature, rain, snowfall, days of sunshine; natural beauty-landforms, hills, rocks, gorges, terrain; water-lakes, ponds, rivers, waterfalls, springs; flora and fauna; wildlife; beaches; islands; spas; scenic attractions. Accessibility, It is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located. Tourists need transportation while traveling, for instance: train, bus, airplane, car, taxi and etc. The accommodation and other facilities complement the attractions. For example: hotel, motel, hostel, guset houses, cottage, pension, camp and etc. Amenities can be of two types; natural, e.g. beaches, sea-bathing, possibilities of fishing, opportunities for climbing, trekking, viewing, etc. and man-made, e.g. various types of entertainment and facilities which cater to the special needs of the tourists. Excellent sandy beaches, sheltered from sunshine with palm and coconut trees and offering good bathing conditions form very good tourist attractions. Certain other natural amenities such as spacious waters for the purpose of sailing or the opportunities for fishing and hunting are also very important

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, it was demonstrated that there is an extensive literature on the link between sport and tourism. Different point of views were presented on the definition and characteristics of sports tourism as well as the composition of a tourism product. Based on the literature review, the methodology was designed and is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods used to achieve the research objectives. It starts by restating the aim and objectives of this research and defines the research questions. It proceeds with the identification of the research methods employed, followed by a description of the research design and the respective operationalization and subsequent approaches adopted for the analysis of the research data.

3.2 The aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this study is to study the current situation of the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan as a sports tourism destination. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives were identified:

Objective 1: Analyze and evaluate the existing supply of sports tourism

Objective 2: Identify the prospects for sports tourism development.

Objective 3: Propose recommendations for further research of sports tourism

The research questions are:

RQ 1 What is the current supply of sports tourism in the Caspian Region?

RQ 2 Does the Caspian region offer market acceptable infrastructure and services for promoting sports tourism?

RQ 3 What are the challenges and perspectives for meeting the market

needs of sport tourists in the Caspian region?

3.3 Literature review

Before identifying the research methods and techniques to be applied in this research, a thorough literature review of the main concepts was conducted. According to Gibson (1998:108) “the critical review of the literature provides the foundation of your research and it informs and refines your research objectives, it also provides a benchmark against which you can compare and contrast your results”. A literature search entails a focus on published information in a particular subject area and sometimes information concerning a particular subject area within a certain time period (WTO, 2011).

According to Saayman (2004:67), a literature review examines the current scholarly work available on a particular subject, perhaps within a given time period. It is not merely a summation of the existing work; its purpose is to analyze critically the applicable “published body of knowledge” in order to establish the current knowledge of that topic. Thus, a literature review is more than a survey of various sources and it is not a book review. It is the summary and synthesis of material gathered from various sources and organized to address an issue, research objective, or problem statement. A literature review, then, must do the following:

- be organized around and related directly to the thesis or research question being developed
- synthesize results into a summary of what is and is not known
- identify areas of controversy in the literature
- formulate questions that need further research (Dana, 2011:54)

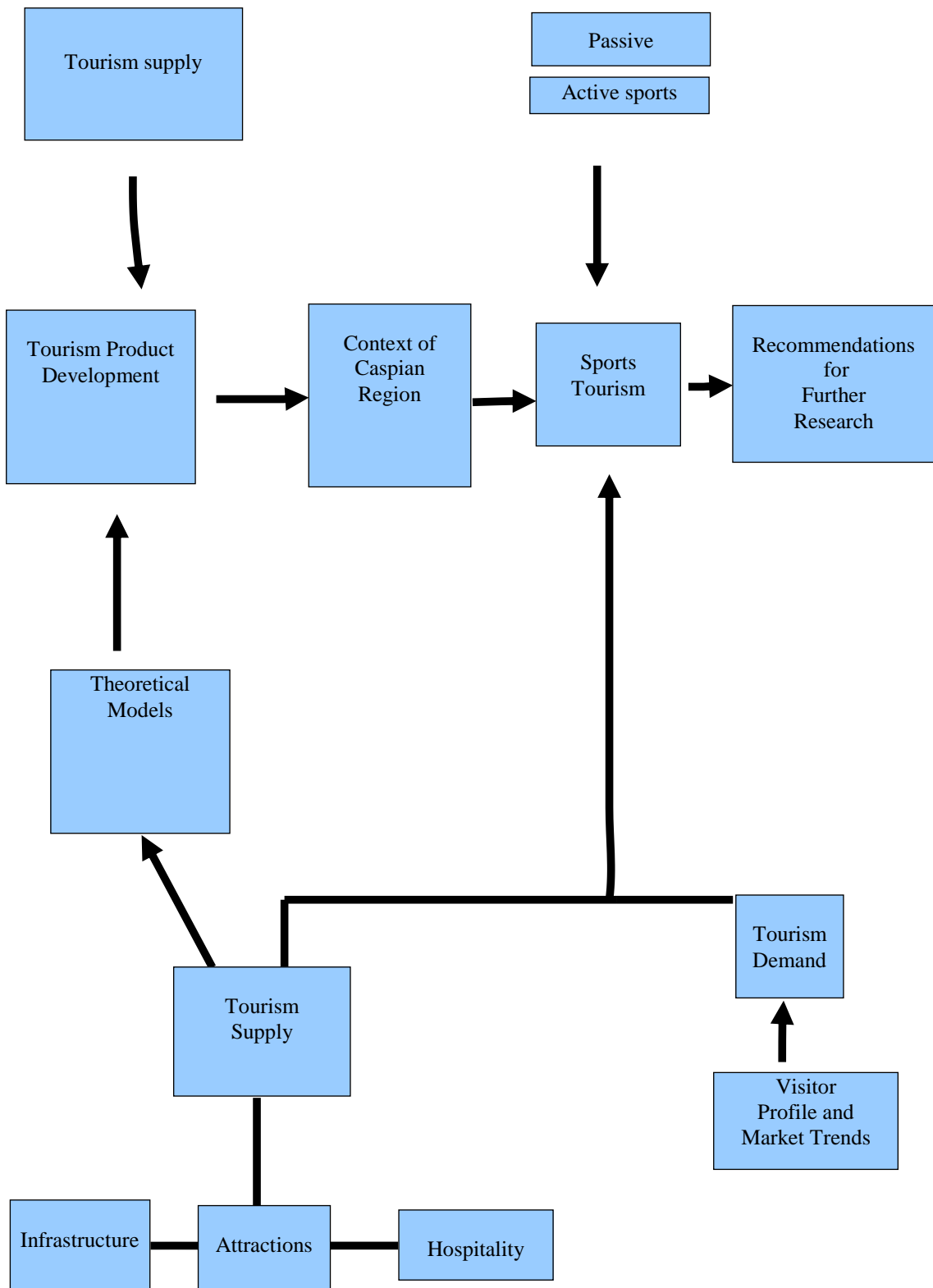
3.4 Operational Guideline

As a result of the literature review, an operational guideline is proposed.

The guideline proposed for this study is designed to guide the development of questions to be answered by the research and to show how the components identified by the researcher fit together (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984 *cit in* Fernandes, 2009).

From the supply perspective, and according to the literature review, the model suggested by Middleton and Clarke (2001) outlining the four types of attractions; the consumer classification of sport and tourism (Gammon and Robinson (2003); the three categories of attractions of sports tourism (Higham and Hinch, 2003) and sport tourism categories (Weed and Bull, 2004); and, sports tourism types and visitor profiles (Reeves, 1998) are used to build the conceptual framework for the case study of the Caspian Region. The guideline (Figure 4) presents a visual summary of the structure within which to organize the content of the research and to frame conclusions within the context (Minichiello et al, 1999 *cit in* Fernandes, 2009:132).

Figure 3: Operational Guideline



Source: Minichiello et al, (1999) *cit in* Fernandes, (2009)

3.5 Research methods and techniques

3.5.1 Research methods

Data can be acquired by quantitative or qualitative methods. Quantitative research — including surveys and customer questionnaires — is about asking people for their opinions in a structured way so that you can produce hard facts and statistics to guide you. To get reliable statistical results, it's important to survey people in fairly large numbers and to make sure they are a representative sample of your target market (Greenberg *et al*, 2005:8). The quantitative research is clarified in following table:

Table 5: Quantitative research

Objective\purpose	To quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest To measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample Sometimes followed by qualitative research which is used to explore some findings further
Sample	Usually a large number of cases representing the population of interest. Randomly selected respondents.
Data collection	Structured techniques such as online questionnaires, on-street or telephone interviews.
Data analysis	Statistical data is usually in the form of tabulations (tabs). Findings are conclusive and usually descriptive in nature.
Outcome	Used to recommend a final course of action.

Source: Greenberg *et al*, (2005:8)

Qualitative research is described by Veal (1997:129) as “an approach which tends to collect a great deal of information about relatively few people rather than more limited information about a large number of people”. The qualitative research is clarified in following table.

Table 6: Qualitative research

Objective\purpose	To gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations To provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses for later quantitative research To uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion
Sample	Usually a small number of non-representative cases. Respondents selected to fulfill a given quota.
Data collection	Unstructured or semi-structured techniques e.g. individual depth interviews or group discussions.
Data analysis	Non-statistical.
Outcome	Exploratory and/or investigative. Findings are not conclusive and cannot be used to make generalizations about the population of interest. Develop an initial understanding and sound base for further decision making.

Source: Greenberg et al, (2005:8)

3.5.2 Research techniques

Primary research is described by Veal (1997) as the gathering of information not available from any other source. Primary research consists of:

- Observation. Observing and measuring the world around you, including observations of people and other measurable events.
- Interviews. Asking participants questions in a one-on-one or small group setting.
- Surveys. Asking participants about their opinions and behaviors through a short questionnaire (Dana, 2011:57)

Secondary research includes data which is published previously in various forms. Veal (1997) describes secondary data as previous published data (can be words and statistics), which have been collected and analyzed by others, and is immediately available at minimal costs and provides a good starting point for further research. Smith and Jenner (1998:73) cited several advantages for working with an existing body of data, including being able to obtain the data quickly and having easy access at minimal cost, better reliability as a result of repeated data collection and testing and making difficult populations accessible. The authors further suggest that secondary data sources may also have disadvantages. The possibility of the lack of availability, incompleteness or lack of relevance may lead

to possible methodological problems (p.79) and available data may be relevant and accurate but still not sufficient to reach conclusions. Finally, secondary data can be classified as:

- ⤴ Data gathered and recorded by someone else prior to and for a purpose other than the current project
- ⤴ Secondary data is data that has been collected for another purpose.
- ⤴ It involves less cost, time and effort
- ⤴ Secondary data is data that is being reused. Usually in a different context.
- ⤴ For example: data from a book (p. 91)

Furthermore, Diddi and LaRose (2006) indicate that there are two types of sources which are used for secondary data, internal sources and external sources (see table 7).

Table 7: The types of sources for secondary data.

Internal sources	External sources
Sales Records	Journals
Marketing Activity	Books
Cost Information	Magazines
Distributor reports and feedback	Newspaper
-	Case study

Source: Diddi and LaRose, (2006:193)

According to the authors, in certain cases internal sources are indispensable without which the researcher cannot obtain desired results. Information from internal sources is easily available and no financial burden is involved in gathering the information. External sources are of immense importance and utility in case where research needs detailed and thorough investigation. Secondary data is already existing which has been collected and published by some individuals or institutions. This data is available at a very low cost and it requires lesser time to collect it.

3.5.3 Methods and techniques selected

Based on the literature review, secondary research was considered the appropriate approach to meet the aim of this research using the qualitative method and case study technique, in accordance with the literature review and because this study is focused on a particular region.

Research was based essentially on external sources. Initially, desk research was conducted to books and journal articles to better understand the essence of the sports tourism product. Then, online search was carried out to collect information about the demand and supply of sports tourism in the Caspian region.

Initially, it was intended to carry out online research. According to MRS Guidelines for Online Research (2012), online research is defined as research in which a respondent, either on a single occasion or as part of a panel, is involved in any of the following:

- ⤴ Completing research documentation (e.g. survey, diary, questionnaires etc) online via any internet connected device;
- ⤴ Downloading research documentation from a server on the internet and returning it by email;
- ⤴ Receiving research documentation incorporated into an email and returning it in the same way;
- ⤴ Participating in an online qualitative interview or discussion;
- ⤴ A measurement system which tracks web usage;
- ⤴ Participating in an online message board;
- ⤴ Collecting information from a social networking service;
- ⤴ Any other collection of personal data in the online environment for the purpose of research (p. 47)

However, the researcher opted for online research mainly because the initial interviews conducted proved useless as the responses were limited to the information existent in the few studies available from the Ministry of Culture and

Tourism of Azerbaijan. Consequently, the researcher modified the approach, from online research to online search.

The Internet is a well-known means to acquire a wide range of information and allows direct communication with online tourism information sources to request information on destinations, accommodations, attractions, restaurants, shopping, and so on (Gursoy *et al*, 2002).

The Internet is useful as a complimentary tool for academic work. In many cases, searching the Internet is perceived as much more efficient (i.e., easier and faster) for finding information than searching print media, such as books (Kioussis and Dimitrova, 2006:177).

Additionally, online search was selected for obtaining secondary data due to certain limitations faced by the researcher. First, studying in Portugal, the researcher was limited in terms of distance to carry out primary research. The researcher returned to Azerbaijan for a short period, but found that sports tourism plans are practically inexistent. Visits were made to the Ministry of Youth and Sport and Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Azerbaijan Tourism Institute, and it was found that the current situation of sports tourism in the Caspian region is constrained by the lack of available information, as no research has been carried out on this topic. These limitations proved a major factor for deciding on secondary methods and particularly the case study approach using online research.

3.5.4 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and with generating or building theory. In a pure sense, all research is exploratory. In the social sciences exploratory research is wedded to the notion of exploration and the researcher as explorer (Stebbins, 2001 in Jupp, 2006). Thus, exploratory research could be used to understand the current situation of a product in order to establish innovative ways of bringing the product to the

intended market. O'Cass and Sok (2015) show how the exploratory approach is quite common in tourism research.

3.6 Summary

This chapter starts with the stipulation of the objectives and research questions. It follows with a presentation of the methodological approach for this study, identifying the different research methods and techniques available and explains the reasons for the selected method and techniques as the means for obtaining answers to the research questions. The exploratory approach is used as it is argued that it provides opportunity to probe and explore the topics under investigation in a flexible manner, particularly based on online search.

CHAPTER FOUR: AZERBAIJAN AND THE CASPIAN REGION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with the characterization of Azerbaijan, including the location, geography and demography, history, culture, political system and economy. The characterization is followed by a focused review of tourism in Azerbaijan. Finally, a description of the Caspian region is presented and a summary of the existing situation of tourism at the regional level.

4.2 Characterization of Azerbaijan

4.2.1 Geography and Demography

Geography

Azerbaijan is located in the South Caucasus, bordered by Georgia and Russia to the north, Armenia to the west, Iran to the south and the Caspian Sea to the east (see map 1). The total area of Azerbaijan is 86.6 thousand square kilometers. The capital city is Baku. The total population of Azerbaijan is 9 million people. Among them 90% are Azerbaijanis, 3,2%-Caucasian nations, 2,5%-Russians and 4,3%-representatives of other nations (Aghayev, 2009:42).

Map 1. Map of Caspian region



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan Republic, (2010)

Azerbaijan is characterized by a diversified landscape. Its territory is situated on the northern extremity of the subtropical zone, in the southeastern part of the Caucasus and the northwestern part of the Iranian plateau. Mountains cover 60% of the total area. Azerbaijan is located in between 40° 30' North Latitude and 47° 30' East Longitude. Latitude and longitude of Azerbaijan has given the country a unique climatic condition. The complicated geographical location and landscape, the proximity of the Caspian Sea, the effect of sun's radiation, air masses of different origin, etc., contribute to its climatological diversity (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999).

Taking into consideration the distribution and features of the weather, temperature, humidity, and precipitation, nine out of the 11 climate patterns can be found in Azerbaijan. Many of these patterns are divided into subtypes, as shown in table 8.

Table 8: The climates of Azerbaijan

Semi-desert and dry steppe climates	cover the central lowlands in the Kur to 400 meters, the Caspian zone from the end of Samur River to the Gizilagaj gulf, the plains of Nakhchivan along the Araz river, and the valleys of the Talish Mountains below 1,000 meters. Annual precipitation accounts for 15 to 50 percent of the possible evaporation. Winters are usually cool. Summers can become very hot, sometimes over 40°C.
Semi-desert and dry steppe climate	with cold winter and dry hot climate.
A moderate climate with mild, dry winters	covers the south hills of the Greater Caucasus, the Ganikh-Eyrichay valley between 200 and 500 meters, and the north and east hills of the Lesser Caucasus between 400 and 1,500 meters. Annual precipitation accounts for 50 to 100 percent of the possible evaporation in this climate zone.
A moderately warm climate with dry summers	covers the Lankaran-Astara region. Annual precipitation accounts for 100 to 150 percent or more of the possible evaporation. Winters are cool, summers are hot and dry, and autumns are rainy. The period of May through August is usually dry, requiring artificial irrigation.
Cold, dry winters	cover the southeast hills of the Greater Caucasus between 1,000 and 2,700 meters, and mountainous regions of the Lesser Caucasus between 1,400 and 2,700 meters. Annual precipitation accounts for 75 to 100 percent of the possible evaporation. Summers are cool and winter is mild.
A cold climate with cool, dry summers	covers the middle and high mountains of Nakhchivan AR between 1,000 and 3,000 meters. Annual precipitation accounts for 50 to 100 percent of possible evaporation. Summers are cool, and winter is cold enough for snow.
A moderate climate with equal distribution of rainfall	covers the mountainous forests in the south between 600 and 1,500 meters, and the northeast hills of the Greater Caucasus between 200 and 500 meters. Annual rainfall accounts for 75 to 100 percent of the possible evaporation in the south hills, and 50 to 100 percent in the northeast hills. Winters are cool, summers warm.
A cold climate with heavy precipitation	year-round occurs in the south hills of the Greater Caucasus between 1,500 and 2,700 meters, which include forest, subalpine, and alpine zones. Annual precipitation accounts for more than 150 to 200 percent of the possible evaporation. Winters are cold, summers cool.
Alpine tundra	covers the areas of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus above 2,700 meters, and Nakhchivan above 3,200 meters. Annual precipitation accounts for more than 100 to 200 percent of the possible evaporation. Winters and summers are both cold. In some places, the snow does not melt until the following winter.

Source: Salmanov (1999: 76)

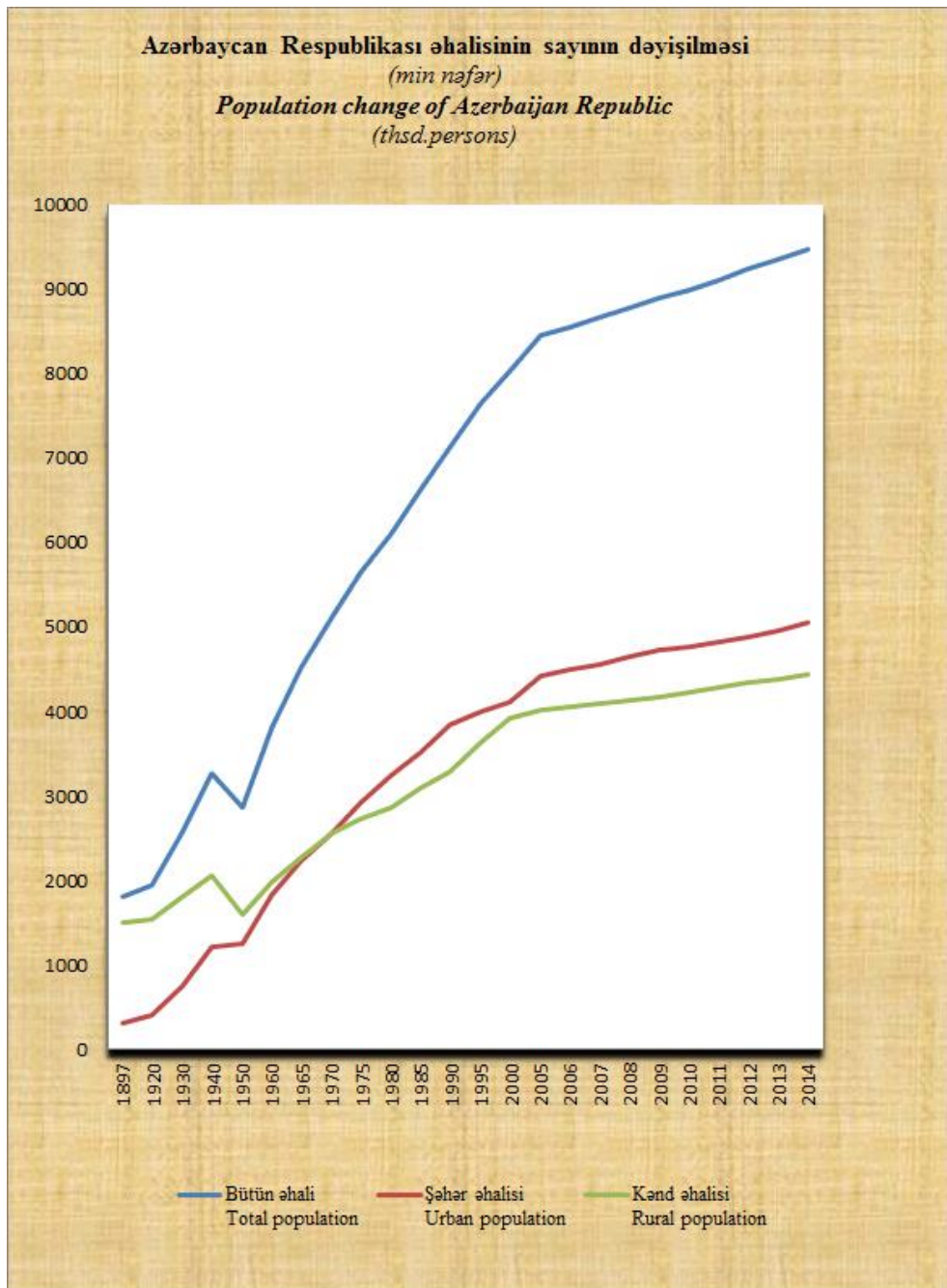
The eastern and central parts of Azerbaijan have subtropical weather and is generally dry. The southern part of the country also has subtropical weather but is marked by the presence of humidity. In the mountain areas of Azerbaijan the weather is influenced by the mountain range. Winter and summer temperature varies according to the climatic regions existent (Salmanov, 1999).

Azerbaijan accounts for 8400 small and large rivers, of which 850 are over 5 kilometers in length and only 24 extend over 100 kilometers. The largest rivers in the Caucasus are Kur and Araz rivers. Also, Azerbaijan has a rich flora. In total, nearly 4500 species of higher, spore-bearing flowering plants belong to 125 types and 920 genres. Azerbaijan is richer than any other Caucasus countries by the total number of species. Furthermore, the country is rich in three types of mineral products that are metallic, non-metallic and combustible mineral products. Azerbaijan is famous for its oil and gas deposits of which 2/3 of the republic is rich in oil and gas. The Caspian Sea is the largest enclosed water basin in the world. It has unique physical and geographical properties, with flora and fauna rich in endemic species. As its water level changes periodically, the volume of water and its boundaries are also variable. At present the level of the sea is 26.75 meters below sea level. At this level the area of the sea is 392600 km², the volume of water is 78648 km³ (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

Demography

The population of Azerbaijan is increasing year by year. Figure 4 illustrates the population change of Azerbaijan from 1897 till 2014. First, the overall population and then the breakdown by inhabitants living in rural and urban areas. Evidence suggests little difference in the number of inhabitants in rural and urban areas.

Figure 4: Demographic figure of Azerbaijan



Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2013)

Of a total population of approximately 9 million inhabitants, 5,327 million (51,7%) live in urban areas and 4,162 million (48,3%) in rural areas. Still, the urban population appears to be increasing in detriment of rural areas.

4.2.2 History

The historical territories of Azerbaijan, the Great Caucasus from the North, the Alagoz chain, the basin of the lake Goycha and the Eastern Anatoly from the west, the Caspian Sea from the East and Sultaniye-Zanjan-Hamadan from the south, comprise primary cultures which gave the start to modern civilization. In fact, Azerbaijan is one of the most ancient sites of humankind. There were living settlements in Azerbaijan even at the earliest stages of humankind (Aghayev, 2009:42).

Historical sources reflect former names of Azerbaijan as Andirpatian, Atropatena, Adirbijan and Azirbijan. The territory of Azerbaijan is rich with archeological monuments which prove it to be one of the regions of the primitive men's first settlement. Archeological finds of the caves of Azikh, Taglar, Damjili, Dashsalahli, Gazma and other monuments, the shin-bone of the most ancient Azikh man lived 300-400 thousand years ago in the Age of Asheul prove the above mentioned theory. As a result, Azerbaijan has been included on the map of 'The ancient settlers of Europe'. In addition, Azeri people have the ancient state system establishment which dates to 5000 years. Islam showed a strong push in the formation of unique people and language. During that historical period (5000 years), the Azerbaijan state played an important role in the international relations and military and the political life of the Near and the Middle East (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

In the period of Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan parliamentary experience had been gained in two stages. The First period lasted from May 27th till November 19th of 1918. In may 28th the Parliament declared about independence of Azerbaijan, assumed governing of the country and adopted historical Declaration of Independence. During 6 month period the Parliament composed of 44 turkic-moslem members, functioned under the name of the National Board of Azerbaijan and adopted very important historical decisions. The Second period of parliamentary experience of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan or the Baku period, started

from December 7th of 1918 and lasted till April 27th of 1920; only 17 months. By its decision from September 1st of 1919 the parliament established the Baku State University. The establishment of the national University was the most important event in the history of our people. Though the fall of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the Baku State University helped to preserve the ideas of Republic and played great role in re-gaining of the independence. The situation changed in 1969 when Heydar Aliyev started his first period of governing Azerbaijan. To make Azerbaijan one of the most advanced republics of the Soviet Union under totalitarian regime, Heydar Aliyev being a great fanatic of his people implemented the programs of great reforms in all the spheres of life (Bunyadov, 2007).

4.2.3 Culture

Azerbaijan is rich in cultural heritage, from historical monuments to rich literature, art, music to the particular lifestyles. The first secular theatre, first opera, first ballet and the first Academy of Sciences in the Muslim East were founded in Azerbaijan. It is suggested that the wonderful nature, climate, natural resources of the country produced a significant impact on the artistic thinking and creative skills of the Azerbaijani people. The folk art is connected with everyday life of people, which occupies a special place in the fine arts as well. The Azerbaijan carpets are world famous as are the carpet-weaving schools (Guba, Baku, Shirvan, Ganca, Gazakh, Garabagh, Tabriz). Some are kept in well-known museums, such as Victoria and Albert of London, Louvre of Paris, Metropolitan of New York, as well as other museums in Vienna, Rome, Berlin, Istanbul, Tehran and Cairo (Aghayev, 2009:60)

Azerbaijan is rich in architectural works dating back to ancient times. Maiden Tower and Shirvanshah Palace in Baku, Momina Khatun and Yusif ibn Kuseyr mausoleums created by architect Ajami in Nakhchyvan, Panah Ali Khan's Palace and poetess Natavan's house in Shusha, paintings on the walls of Palace of Shaki Khan are unique patterns of architecture are only some examples. Azerbaijan is rich with countryside; climate-temperature, rain, snowfall, days of sunshine; natural beauty-landforms, hills, rocks, gorges, terrain; water-lakes, ponds, rivers, water-

falls, springs; flora and fauna; wildlife; beaches; islands; spas and etc. (Salmanov (1999)

4.2.4 Political system

Azerbaijan is a former Soviet Republic. Upon its independence in 1991, it initiated a process which led to the structural formation of the current political system. The (new) Constitution approved on November 12th, 1995 established Azerbaijan as a democratic, constitutional, secular and unitary republic. The power in Azerbaijan is divided into the legislative, executive and judicial branches, each acting in accordance with the constitution and legislative acts. The president is the head of state. Executive power is carried out by the president, while the judicial power is held by the courts of Azerbaijan (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010). The legislative branch is made up of the single chamber (parliament) -- Milli Majlis. Its deputies are elected through a majority election system by means of free, private and secret voting.

4.2.5 Economy

After restoration of independence in 1991, Azerbaijan began to realize its sovereign rights in the economic field and to implement an independent policy. The main directions of this policy were organized on an economic system based on different types of property, transition to market economy and integration into the global economy (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

As the result of far-sighted policy and intensive activities, significant results were achieved in the fields of socio-economic development and integration into the global economic system within a short period of time – in spite of unfavorable initial conditions, resultant of economic and political stability (1991-95). Still, during this period, a great achievement was made— the Azerbaijani model of the state system was established. One of the main tasks of the country's leadership in that period was the pursuit of efficient use and reallocation of the benefits from rich oil

and gas endowment (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010) which permitted the diversification of the national economy. Developing entrepreneurship, attracting domestic and foreign investment by establishing favorable business and investment environment, obtaining non-oil sectors' development were specific features of the implementation of the economic policy at this stage (Aghayev 2009:55).

Moreover, in order to channel the revenues from oil exports to the priority sectors of the economy and important social and economic projects, the State Oil Fund was established. In the beginning of economic recovery, the country lacked oil exporting infrastructure. In order to fill this gap, in 1996 Azerbaijan signed an agreement allowed its oil exports via Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline. In 1999 the new pipeline Baku-Supsa was put into use; additionally, an agreement on construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, which is currently the major oil exporting pipeline. Oil-gas sector played a dominant role in developing other sectors of economy. This economic policy led to macroeconomic stability and sustainable economic growth. Consequently, the reforms started in all economic fields, new measures were taken in order to improve social welfare of the population (Aghayev 2009:55).

Despite the period of recession (1991-1995) that occurred in major developed economies during the global financial-economic crisis, Azerbaijan preserved macroeconomic stability, economic growth, reduction of poverty, and increasing social and economic welfare of population. At the same time, Azerbaijan led in economic growth among regional countries. The aim continued to be economic expansion and the diversification of the economy, in order to minimize its dependence from oil sector. Furthermore, the objectives included the transit to innovative economy, promote intensive production in agriculture, developing of the economy in clusters, improving business environment, establishing economic areas and industrial zones, advice and information providing, strengthening government support for entrepreneurship and developing business relationships. As such, the increase of social and economic welfare of the population remains the main direction and priority of social-economic policy for the coming years

(Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

Between 1995 and 2003, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 90.1%, revenues of government budget increased more than 3 times, international reserves 85 times, industrial production by 25.2%, agricultural production by 53.9%, foreign trade 4 times, average monthly real wages 5.6 times, inflation decreased to 2-3% and total capital investment amounted more than 20 billion USD. From this success resulted that, the business environment, economic areas and industrial zones of Azerbaijan started to improve and develop (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

Industrial production is one of the most developed areas in Azerbaijan. It covers fuel and energy, chemistry, mechanical engineering, metallurgy, food production, electricity and other sectors. The industrial development began in mid-1950s. As the result of radical changes in the national economy, the period from 1995 to 2008 witnessed major successes in industrial production. For example, the production sharing agreements of oil and gas fields with large foreign companies in 1994 encouraged rapid development of the oil and gas industries. The dynamic development of oil sector is expected to create the opportunities for the accelerated development of non-oil sector as well. At the same time, the favorable investment environment in non-oil sector, privatization processes and other reforms are expected to encourage non-oil sector development during 2008-2015 (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

Azerbaijan is particularly famous for its rich natural resources. The oil industry of Azerbaijan has a history of over 150 years. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan was only able to begin a wide-scale utilization of these reserves in the late 20th century. (Aghayev 2009:55). In the beginning of economic recovery (1996), the country lacked oil exporting infrastructure. In order to fill this gap, Azerbaijan signed an agreement which led to oil being exported via the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline. In 1999, a new pipeline (Baku-Supsa) was put into use. More recently, a third pipeline was constructed (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan), which is currently the major oil

exporting pipeline.

The oil and gas sector has dominated the economy of Azerbaijan for several years and still continues to grow. The following table summarizes the importance of the oil and gas sector in Azerbaijan between 2005 and 2013.

Table 9: The Oil and Gas Sector in Azerbaijan, 2005-2013

	2005	2007	2009	2010	2011	2013
GDP growth rate %	11.2	10.2	26.4	34	25	10.8
Share of oil and gas sector in GDP(%)	30.1	31.3	44.1	53.8	55.9	54.1
Share of oil and gas sector in industrial output (%)	62.1	61.6	75	82.8	85.7	89
Share of petroleum in gross export(%)	85.7	82.7	86.5	92.2	94.2	93.1
Share of oil and gas sector in FDI (%)	98.5	97.5	94.2	90.3	90.1	83.9

Source: IMF, Central Bank of Azerbaijan and SSCA (2013)

Table 9 shows that in 2013 the oil sector accounted for 54.1% of total GDP, for 93.1% of total gross exports and for 83.9% of total foreign investment. In 2013, the gross exports of goods in the country amounted to \$30.6 billion, and petroleum products accounted for 93.1% of that total. Out of the total exported petroleum products (\$28.5 billion), the export of petroleum products accounted for \$2.2 billion and crude oil exports for \$26.3 billion. In the same year, foreign direct investment was close to \$4 billion which was mainly used to finance large scale oil and gas projects, such as the BP (British Petroleum) exploration (Shakhdeniz) project and operations at the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshly field. Most importantly, the oil-gas sector has played a dominant role in developing other sectors of the national economy.

4.2.6 Tourism in Azerbaijan

Tourism is a leading sector among the non-state sectors due to its scale-10% of GNP, 8.1% of employment and 8% of total exports come from the tourism sector. Azerbaijan receives \$100 million annual profit from tourism. Azerbaijan has achieved some success in building its capacity to develop tourism. Nevertheless,

Azerbaijan needs to pursue the competitiveness of its tourism businesses through the implementation of relevant infrastructure projects in the direction of turning this capacity into opportunities and eventually its further development (Bayramov et al, 2011:4).

The number of foreign visitors to Azerbaijan is increasing. Table 10 shows the number of international tourist arrivals (*received*) and departures (*dispatched*) in the period between 2006 and 2013. The number of arrivals and departures doubled during this period and the length of stay actually tripled. The impact of the tourists' revenue is influencing the development of the tourism industry in Azerbaijan.

Table 10: Number of international tourist arrivals and departures in Azerbaijan

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of received and dispatched tourists, person	45605	56290	59607	59700	69923	83620	101431	91961
Including:								
received	14472	12356	19288	17009	17641	18840	23440	10605
dispatched	31133	43934	40319	42691	52282	64780	77991	81356
Number of received and dispatched tour-days, person-day	218982	341502	358806	383479	458568	544778	674435	670367
Including:								
received	82857	55004	104494	109282	111232	126975	135838	58173
dispatched	136125	286498	254312	274197	347336	417803	538597	612194

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Azerbaijan has been active in pursuing its integration in European and the world tourism community with the participation in the international tourism exhibitions and fairs. In 2001, Azerbaijan was admitted into the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Since then, WTO has provided recommendations and assistance on a wide range of tourism related areas and policy. For example, Azerbaijan declared the "Year of Tourism" in 2011. The tourism sector is of key importance and a priority direction of the non-state sector. Today campaigns are carried out to draw tourists from foreign countries and initiatives are being taken to promote the tourism image of Azerbaijan abroad. For example, Azerbaijan was the major sponsor of the Real Madrid football team that in 2014 won the European

Champions League.

Azerbaijan offers a variety of special interest spread throughout the national territory. From exotic hunting for Daghestanian goat in the alpine parts of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, relaxation and sun, sand and sea on the coast of the Caspian Sea to the Silk Road in Azerbaijan, based on a bus tour “Along Azeri Silk Road” on the route Baku-Shamakha-Sheki-Balakan-Georgia. In fact, WTO (2011) published a colorful booklet “Silk Road” with a section dedicated to Azerbaijan.

In 2009, the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) announced a program called “National Strategy on Physical Education and Sport Development (NSPESD) of Azerbaijan” that encompasses the years 2009-2020. This document establishes the strategic direction and policy priorities that combine sport activities of all organizations in the country to fulfill the task of turning Azerbaijan into an active and successful sports destination in the world by 2020. The content of the strategy is to promote and develop the country worldwide as a tourism destination and also improve sports tourism in Azerbaijan.

The Orienteering Sporting Federation of Azerbaijan (2012:2) used the MYS strategy to specify the development of sports and sports tourism and advanced an action plan that stipulates the following:

- Creating sport clubs, child-sport clubs and providing their activities in educational institutions especially in secondary schools;
- Achieving the usage of the sport equipments and objects in all of the educational institutions in the country by 2020;
- High level organization and realization of the Republic festivals;
- Creating Physical education and sport Councils that will work with social principles in all the ministries, committees and companies, institutions and enterprises and providing their activities;
- Constructing a specialized Olympic Complex in the Baku city (Caspian region) by 2015 in order to provide the preparation of National Teams of the republic for the Paralympic games at a required level;

- Creating a “Rehabilitation and sport centre of disabled people”, state level institution, together with organizing activities of its branches in some regions by 2015;
- Solving the problem of cadre insufficiency on this sphere in the country by 2016, improving cadre preparation issues on physical education and sport;
- Providing training programs on sport types that have been developed by different sport preparation schools functioning in the country by 2015;
- Creating the Republic Scientific-research institute on Physical education and sport in Caspian region by 2020;
- Hosting the 32th Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Caspian region in 2020, make Azerbaijan an Olympic country;
- There are a lot of Olympic complexes in different cities and regions of the country, especially in Caspian region, and will be creating also water sport schools in Caspian region, by 2020;
- New Olympic complexes, sport institutions are being opened in 2015.

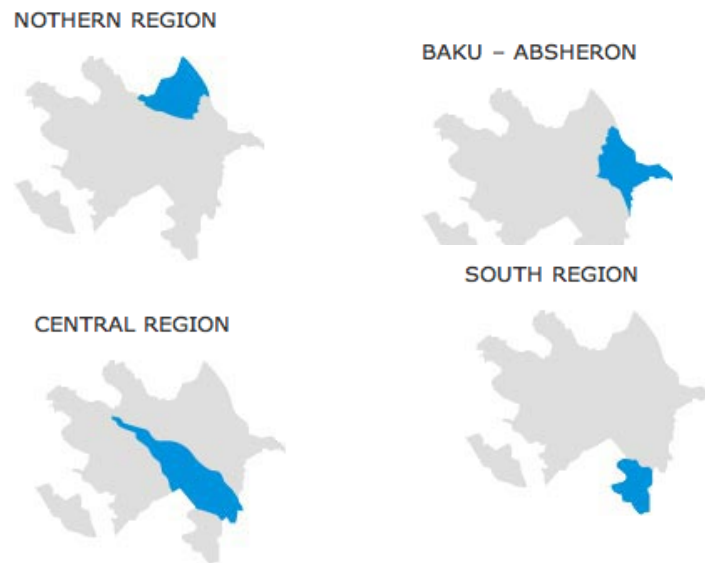
The purpose of this action plan is to contribute to the development of sports facilities that could be used for tourism purposes.

4.3 Characterization of the Caspian region

The Caspian region is generally referred to as an international geographic area encompassing all countries that border the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea is located in an inland depression on the border of Europe and Asia. It is the largest enclosed sea in the world, with the area of 3.5 million square kilometers (km²) World Bank (2006).

For purposes of this study, the Caspian Region includes the territory of Azerbaijan that borders the western side of the Caspian Sea. That includes the administrative districts of Guba (Kuba)-Khachmaz, Absheron (Apsheron), Central Aran, and Lenkoran (see map 2).

Map 2: Caspian region in a regional context



Source: Salmanov, M.A. (1999).

The coastal area bordering the Caspian Sea is quite diverse in terms of features. The northern part is generally semi-arid resulting in a continental climate with cold winters and hot summers. The middle part is characterized by mild winters and hot summers. The southern area is characterized by high level of humidity, receiving between 400 and 1 200 mm of rain per year, causing a sub-tropical climate with mild winters and warm humid summer. The climate conditions largely influence the land use in the coastal region (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999).

The Caspian region is home to almost half of the population in Azerbaijan, with five million inhabitants. The Apsheron Peninsula and Lenkoran Lowland (Baku area) are the most populated areas of Azerbaijan (Baloglu, and McCleary, 1999).

Economically, the Caspian oil and gas reserves have been the major driving force for the regional economy during the past 10 years. Most of the national industries are located in the Baku-Sumgayit area, including the offshore oil and gas installations. The fisheries also contribute a minor part of the economy in Caspian region. It is from the Caspian region that is exported the famous sturgeon caviar to all over the world (Kasymov, 2001).

4.3.1 Tourism in the Caspian Region

The most important segment of the tourism potential of Azerbaijan is the sunny coast of the Caspian Sea, which has various natural landscapes, including sandy beaches. Map 3 shows the main places attracting visitors.

Map 3: Caspian Region, by districts



1994 MAGELLAN GeographixSM Santa Barbara, CA (800) 929-4627

Source: Salmanov, M.A. (1999).

The Lenkoran, Baku, Gobustan, Nabran, Mingachavir, Quba and Khachmaz areas tend to be the most popular destinations for visitors. Particular attention has been paid to the resort areas and tourism complexes along Absheron (Kala, Baku, Lokbatan, Sumgayit, Buzovna). This area is expected to make a considerable contribution to the development of the regional (and national) economy as inflow of foreign currency, increased employment, as well as the preservation and rational

exploitation of the sea-coast due to the increasing attractiveness of tourism sphere of international business and business-like cooperation (World Bank, 2006).

Particularly in the summer, the Caspian region is quite popular with tourists seeking relaxation and sunbathing. Summer homes/second residences, from small bungalows to terraced three-story ultra-modern mansions, provide a destination for millions of visitors (Shabanov, 2008:64). Each summer, millions of domestic tourists, mostly from the western part of the country, visit the area and investment in the accommodation sector and second residences has taken place along the Caspian coast. According to Kosarev and Yablonskaya (1994), the tourism potential of most of the Caspian Region is high, but at present, the necessary infrastructure cannot be funded and the lack of water supply outside the main cities is a severe constraint. Fear of pollution and the inundation of tourist destinations as a result of sea level rise have also halted the development of the tourist sector.

4.4 Summary

This chapter provides a general characterization of Azerbaijan, particularly related to its location, geography, demography, history, culture, political system and economy. Particular emphasis was placed on tourism in Azerbaijan and then more specifically in the Caspian Region, with a brief summary of its potential for tourism development. This characterization serves as the contextualization of the case study which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

As specified in the introduction and methodology chapters, the main aim of this study is to study the current situation of the Caspian region as a sports tourism destination. In this chapter, results are presented and discussed from both the demand and supply side and findings are examined in accordance with the three research questions proposed for this study. The most part of research was conducted through the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

5.2 Results of market demand

In the literature review are presented general characteristics of the sports tourist. But in order to develop a specific tourism product it is suggested that more specific information be available on the profile of the potential visitors. In Azerbaijan, no visitor market research has taken place, much less on such specific product as sports tourism and in the Caspian Region. In fact, other than official data from the national statistics organization, no other data is available. As a result, a general overview is presented of the available data on visitors to Azerbaijan, mostly concentrated on the Caspian Region.

According to table 11, most visitors to the Caspian Region are from bordering countries (Russia, Georgia, Turkey and Iran). Russia is the major source of visitors, followed by Georgia. Visitors from Iran have been diminishing since 2011 and Germany since 2012. On the other hand, considerable increases are seen from Turkey. Also, modest increases from Ukraine, United Kingdom, Kazakhstan and the United States.

Table 11: Number of foreign arrivals (by country)

Top 10 Countries	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total number of foreign arrivals	1.962,9 m		2. 239,2 m		2.484,1 m		2.508,9 m	
Russian Federation	701,110	35,7	786,684	35	876,013	35	903,242	36
Georgia	491,942	25	573,063	25,6	763,251	30	810,390	32,3
Iran	349,960	17	407,576	18	283,739	11,4	143,579	5,7
Turkey	214,594	10,9	242,606	10,8	295,549	11,9	361,413	14,4
Ukraine	31,500	1,6	40,030	1,8	42,393	1,7	51,802	2
United kingdom	24,160	1,2	24,646	1,1	29,125	1,2	32,841	1,3
Kazakstan	19,209	0,1	28,225	1,2	25,295	1	28,226	1,1
USA	11,986	0,6	11,443	0,5	13,687	0,6	15,612	0,6
Germany	10,602	0,5	11,927	0,5	16,445	0,7	13,920	0,6
Uzbekistan	11,879	0,6	14,513	0,6	18,417	0,7	18,627	0,7

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 12 shows the total number of arrivals to Azerbaijan between 2010 and 2013. The table also identifies the purpose of the trip (motivation). In 2013, tourists visited mostly for leisure and recreation (7%), business (6,5%), treatment (0,5%), religious (0,14%), visiting friends and relatives and other purpose (6,7%). The leisure and recreation sector is the most popular motivation for visiting.

Table 12: Purpose of trip

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thou-sands)	%	Number (thou-sands)	%	Number (thou-sands)	%
Leisure, recreation tourism	661,7	33,7	519,8	23,2	687,8	27,7	705,2	28,1
Business tourism	547,6	27,9	591,9	26,4	595,3	23,1	648,9	25,9
Treatment tourism	14,1	0,7	33,3	1,5	43	1,7	46,2	1,8
Religious tourism	10,2	0,5	10,5	0,5	13,2	0,5	13,7	0,5
Visiting friends and relatives	374,7	16,7	607,8	24,5	673,7	26,9
Other tourism purpose	46,2	2,4	31,7	1,4	38,8	1,6	41,8	1,7
Other purpose	683,1	34,8	677,3	30,2	498,2	20,1	379,4	15,1

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 13 shows the total number of rooms and beds, followed by the occupancy

rate by number and percentage. Figures are divided by type of property—state, private, foreign and joint owned.

Table 13: Number of rooms and bed places by property type

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Total number of rooms	14158		14815		15898		16559	
Total number of beds	28316		29630		32834		33118	
By property type								
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
state	2198	15,5	1972	13,3	1538	9,7	1544	9,3
private	10580	74,7	11557	78,0	12715	79,10	13420	81
foreign	940	6,6	846	5,7	1146	7,2	1060	6,4
joint	440	3,1	440	2,19	499	3,1	535	3,2
Number and % of occupancy	9015		9148		10148		10661	
state	1201	13,3	790	8,6	499	4,9	483	4,5
private	6725	74,6	7269	79,5	8216	80,10	8807	82,6
foreign	649	7,2	649	7,1	971	9,6	900	8,4
joint	440	4,9	440	4,8	462	4,6	471	4,4
Number and % of bed occupancy	18722		18746		19152		20100	
state	2679	14,3	1713	9,13	1132	5,9	1090	5,4
private	14687	78,4	15706	83,8	16066	83,9	17192	85,5
foreign	874	4,7	871	4,6	1360	7,1	1215	6
joint	482	2,6	456	2,4	594	3,1	603	3

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 14: Number and percentage of nights spent by guests by property type

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Total number of nights spent by guests	1358286		1504312		1640863		1674065	
By property type								
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
state	246281	18,1	130657	8,7	67793	4,1	72366	4,3
private	906785	66	1148717	76,4	1237678	75,4	1246669	74,5
foreign	133139	9,1	160943	10,7	165613	10,1	204687	12,2
joint	72081	5,4	63995	4,3	169779	10,3	150343	8,10
Total number of guests	438479		510162		624924		666348	
By property type								
state	26412	6	20158	3,10	16513	2,6	18172	2,7
private	290232	66,2	349416	68,5	401355	64,2	468163	70,3
Foreign	67571	15,4	85964	16,9	134173	21,5	111129	16,7
joint	54264	12,4	54624	10,7	72883	11,7	68884	10,3

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Regarding the beds, table 14 includes the total number and percentage and by property type. The national statistics organization distributes the tourists by economic region (table 15).

Table 15: Number of received tourists by economic regions

Economic region	2010	2011	2012	2013
By country-total	17641	18840	23440	10605
Baku city	17370	18498	23290	10440
Absheron economic region	271	342	150	165
Guba-Khachmaz economic region	-	-	-	-
Aran economic region	-	-	7	18
Lankaran economic region	-	-	-	33

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 15 shows that most tourists are visiting Baku which is in Absheron economic region. For statistical purposes, Baku city is separated from the rest of the Absheron region. The city of Baku and the rest of the Absheron region comprise about 99% of all tourists to Azerbaijan (table 15).

Table 16 shows the number and percentage of persons accommodated by purpose of trip.

Table 16: Number and percentage of accommodated persons by purpose of trip

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Number placed person	438479		510162		624924		666348	
Tourism purpose	347972	79,4	425666		520958		546937	
Leisure, recreation	150832	34,4	172797	33,9	225646	36,1	226464	33,10
Business	151012	34,4	185094	36,3	247304	39,6	232796	34,9
Treatment	28424	6,5	27533	5,4	15145	2,4	45060	6,8
Other tourism purpose	17704	4	40242	7,9	32863	5,3	42617	6,4
Other	90507	20,6	84496	16,6	103966	16,6	119411	17,9

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 17 specifies the number and percentage of tourists visiting diverse regions of the country.

Table 17: Number and percentage of bed nights by purpose of travel by economic regions in 2013

Economic regions	Total	Tourism purpose	By purpose; Leisure, recreation tourism	By purpose; Business tourism	By purpose; Treatment tourism	By purpose; Other tourism purpose	Other purpose
By country- total	666348	546937	226464	232796	45060	42617	119411
Baku city	456464	362976	128530	180684	29447	24315	93488
Absheron economic region	5266	5222	5006	216	-	-	44
Lankaran economic region	17337	17041	7967	7809	146	1119	296
Guba-Khachmaz economic region	32914	32243	26456	4304	1465	18	671
Aran economic region	23733	11961	3286	7969	8	698	11772

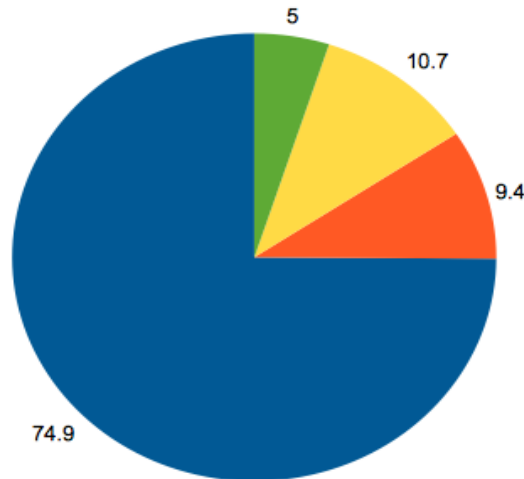
Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

The Caspian region (Baku, Absheron and Lankaran) received in 2013, 666.348 tourists.

Figure 5 shows the most important modes of transport used by visitors to

Azerbaijan in 2013.

Figure 5: Modes of transport in 2013 (%)



Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

74,9 % are served by air transport, 9,4 % by car, 10,7 % by motor bike, bus and 5% by railway. The main gateway to Azerbaijan and the Caspian region is by air transport via Baku airport.

Table 18 indicates the number of arrivals by mode of transport and table 19 shows the number of visitors using each mode of transport.

Table 18: Number of arrivals + departures by mode of transport

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Number of foreign arrivals (thousands)	1.962,9		2.239,2		2.484,1		2.508,9	
Modes of transport								
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Road	720.4	36,8	792.2	35,4	891.7	35,9	928.2	36,10
Railway	312.1	15,9	372.8	16,6	404.4	16,3	378.8	15,1
Air	645.8	32,9	795.5	35,5	946.4	38,1	993.5	39,6
Water	14.1	0,7	19.9	0,9	21.2	0,9	26.6	1,1
Other	270.5	13,8	258.8	11,6	220.4	8,9	181.8	7,2

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 18 shows the number of arrivals and departures by modes of transport.

Table 19: Number of tourists served by modes of transport

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of served tourists	69.923	83620	101431	91961
Bus	10665	22073	30240	14868
Railway	102	184	244	340
Air transport	49594	48669	61991	68046
Water transport	16	16	-	-
Car transport	4357	5934	4956	8707
Other modes of transport	5189	6744	4000	-

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

No data is available specifically on sports motivated visits. Yet, it is recognized in the literature review (chapter 2), the need for specific data that would allow a more thorough profile of the intended market segment. For this study, the closest visitor type identified is that associated to the leisure and recreation purpose of the visit.

But here also, there is no specific data available. Consequently, such data as related to the behavior and consumption patterns of the visitors cannot be established. As such, secondary data was consulted on the profile of sports tourists to other destinations in the form of generalization of the results.

One such study is that of Ross (2001), *Developing Sports Tourism - An eGuide for Destination Marketers and Sports Events Planners* presents arguments on why it is important to gather information about sport tourists. According to the study, the more you learn about who sport-tourists are, where they are coming from and their motives and expectations for their visit, the better one can plan events and services. Furthermore, intensive market analysis is required to understand what sport-tourists need, how they think, and what their questions are (p. 10).

For example, Ross indicates the following characteristic of active sport tourists (p. 9):

- More likely to be male

- Affluent individuals
- College educated
- Willing to travel long distances to participate in their favorite sports
- Likely to engage in active sport tourism well into retirement
- Tend to engage in repeat activity (i.e., not a “one-off” vacation)

Although, it must be noted that the profile of sport tourists most likely changes from event to event.

For passive sport tourists, the author indicates the following characteristics (p. 10):

Profiling the sport fan is not straightforward. “Fans” vary by sport and, in overall intensity, by individual. However, most of the syndicated research focuses on general sport consumer profiles and does not focus on fans per se.

One study conducted in 1995 attempted to build a “sportfan index”. The study reports the percentage of fans that watched, listened to, read, or talked about sport every day or almost every day. The results of the study found that high-level fans were more likely to do these activities than the medium or low-level fans. In terms of reading or watching sports news everyday, high-level fans were more than twice as likely to do so as compared to low-level fans.

The demographic profile varied as well. Males were disproportionately more likely to be medium and high level fans. Females were disproportionately more likely to be classified as low-level fans.

The study also showed that the level of interest in sport does not vary much by educational level. Education has the potential to create highly vested fans, however, because these individuals are more likely to do more reading in general, which may translate to reading more about sport. The study also showed that people over the age of 55 are less likely to be included in the high-fan level than the low and medium levels.

Developing a communication strategy for identifying the means for communicating with the potential market segment is among the first issues needed to be addressed, both for the destination and the events it will execute.

5.2.1 Communication strategy with the potential market segment

For the first time, in 2014 the national government approved a national tourism development plan which identifies the need for improved and broader marketing so as to attract more visitors to the country. Currently, traditional means of marketing predominates. For example, the Caspian region currently has two foreign published guidebooks in English (Mark Elliot's "Azerbaijan with excursions to Georgia" and the "Lonely Planet Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan"). The Ministry regularly publishes "guide books" which are largely advertising booklets, with some information about the regions and activities. Mark Elliot's book is by far the most comprehensive and useful source of information as a tourist in Azerbaijan. However, there is a complete lack of disposable literature such as brochures, maps, post cards, lists of food establishments and places of interest as well as for shopping (IMF, Central Bank of Azerbaijan and SSCA, 2013) and increasingly communication in the form of digital marketing.

The Caspian region has been represented by the Ministry of Tourism at major tourism trade shows, most recently in London's World Travel Market. But few local Tour Operators are currently attending any of these shows and it is impossible to sell package tours to a country without the participation of the local. Furthermore, due to limited budgets, there have been great difficulties in developing promotional material.

The Ministry of Tourism in cooperation with local agencies has organized the International Tourism Fair in the Caspian region in 2002, 2003, 2011 and 2014. These events serve as opportunities to showcase the tourism supply and further the tourism potential of the Caspian Region. But most importantly, these events brought together many of the businesses involved in the tourism industry.

The image of Azerbaijan abroad may be suffering from its association with the violence that has taken and is taking place in the Caucasus, from Chechnya to the still simmering conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, any public relations campaign

should emphasize that Azerbaijan is a peaceful country with a secular government. In today's world, any marketing plan has an extensive Internet component. Azerbaijan is and should be no different. At this point and time, there are three types of web sites that provide Azerbaijani tourism information, which are assessed individually below:

- international travel search engines that provide limited information about Caspian region and a few links to other tourism websites;
- a handful of difficult to find Caspian region tourism web sites;
- a few travel agency sites that provide direct tour services to Azerbaijan.

None of the websites visited can be considered comprehensive by any means. Thus, in order to find information on agencies, business, and general information about Caspian region, along with links to valuable external resources, one has to cobble together the information found in all of these sites, making it of little use to the average potential tourist (Shabanov, 2008:34).

Considering the much travelled and ever-demanding current tourist, the Caspian Region needs to place much more emphasis on an effective communication strategy.

5.3 Results of supply side

5.3.1 Hospitality sector

5.3.1.1 Accommodation

One of Caspian region's strongest assets for tourism development is its service culture-Azerbaijanis are famous for their hospitality. This culture is best reflected in the hotel and restaurant sectors. According to the statistics report (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014), there are about 100 hotels located in the country, mostly concentrated in the Caspian area, especially in Baku. These hotels include multinational chains such as the Hyatt and Radisson, Hilton, Marriott, Four Seasons, Fairmont, Sheraton, Park Inn as well as locally

owned boutique hotels like the new Hotel Diplomat and Hotel Meridian. Currently, some of these hotels are largely used by business travelers associated with the oil industry (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013). There are three major cities in the Caspian region-Baku, Lankaran and Nabran. Outside of Baku, the number of accommodation units is extremely limited.

Table 20 shows the number of units which belong to the government, private enterprises, international brands and joint/other places. Private enterprises represent the overwhelmingly majority of the supply of accommodation units.

Table 20: Number of accommodation units by property type

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Number of accommodation units	499		508		514		530	
Property type								
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
State (by government)	37	7,4	34	6,7	27	5,3	27	5,1
Private	447	89,6	460	90,6	466	90,7	485	91,6
Foreign (international brands)	12	2,4	11	2,2	17	3,3	13	2,5
Joint (other)	3	0,6	3	0,6	4	0,8	5	0,10

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 21 shows the capacity of hotels and hotel types of enterprises by property type in Caspian region.

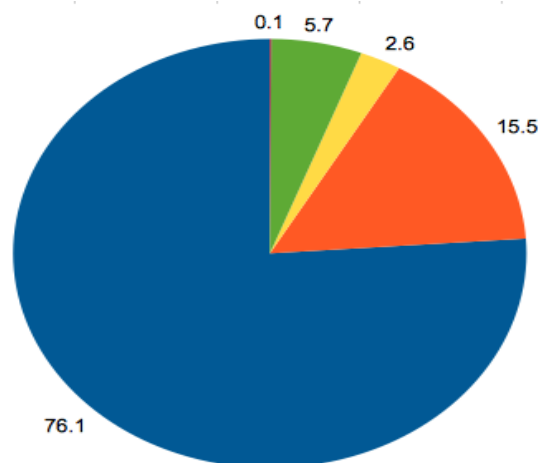
Table 21: Capacity of accommodation units by property type

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	30793	31979	32834	33951
<i>Including property type:</i>				
State (governmental)	5189	4856	3740	3745
Private	23868	25592	26765	28007
Foreign (international)	1254	1075	1625	1461
Joint (mixed)	482	456	704	738

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Outside of Baku, accommodation units can be found in Lankaran, in the more rural areas, and include guesthouses and resorts, particularly in the mountains. The other location with accommodation units is in Nabran, but with even fewer options of accommodation for tourists--10 approximately. In Nabran, new hotels and guest houses have been opened since 2013 to handle the overflow from the Atlant hotel (the most popular accommodation unit). Additionally, the new Olympic center has guest houses which are often available to visitors when not being used by athletes. Outside of the city, there are a couple of cottage resorts and campgrounds. If tourism to Nabran is developed further, there will be a need for increased accommodation space for visitors (Jevanshir, 2009:8).

Figure 6: Structure of accommodated tourists by types of accommodation in 2014 (%)



Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

The figure 6 shows how many tourists were accommodated in the Caspian region in 2014. The 76,1% tourists are accommodated in guest houses, hotels, 15,5% tourists in boarding houses, 2,6 % in tourists centers, 5,7% in other places and 0,1% in private dwellings.

Table 22: Main indicators of accommodation units by type of enterprise

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total number of accommodation units by type of enterprise	499	508	514	530
Capacity, bed places	30793	31979	32834	33951
Number of rooms, unit	14158	14815	15898	16559
Bed presented for overnight stop, unit	1358286	1504312	1640863	1674065
Number of accommodated persons-total, person	438479	510162	624924	666348
Arrivals by the purpose of leisure, recreation	150832	172797	225646	226464
Arrivals for the purpose of business	151012	185094	247304	232796
Arrivals for the purpose of treatment	28424	27533	15145	45060
Other tourism purpose	17704	40242	32863	42617
Arrivals for the other purpose	90507	84496	103966	119411

Source: Adapted from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Table 22 shows the capacity, bed places, the number of rooms, bed presented for overnight stop, the number of accommodated persons-total, arrivals by the purpose of trip.

5.3.1.2 Food Establishments / Restaurants

In the Caspian region, Baku not only has most developed lodging infrastructure, but also the top restaurants. This is probably not surprising as Baku is the biggest city in Azerbaijan and its capital. Here, the international traveler can enjoy high quality food, excellent service, and most international or ethnic cuisines at reasonable prices. In Baku, this is one area of the tourism sector that can readily accommodate increased international tourists (Jevanshir, 2009).

But elsewhere in the region, the number and variety of restaurants drops considerably. Already in 2009, it was claimed that if the city and region develops its tourism industry further, improvement of the quality of restaurants would be necessary (Jevanshir, 2009), in terms of menu, atmosphere, service, hygiene and cleanliness.

Table 23: The type of restaurants, Caspian region

Type of restaurants	Number
Local restaurants	106
International restaurants	88
Cafe, cafe houses and Lounge	65
Bars and Pubs	56
Night clubs\Karaoke	44
Fast Food	46
Pizzeria	15
Tea Houses	156

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

The table 23 shows the number of restaurants located in the Caspian region. They are divided into various types. For example, visitors can find traditional food in local restaurants as well as sweets and tea in tea houses. The others establishments essentially offer diverse national foods like italian, french, american, indian, arabian, and turkish restaurants.

5.4 Results of Accessibility / Support Infrastructure

5.4.1 Transportation

Azerbaijan has a relatively functional transportation network, with most major cities connected to Baku by both road and railway. However, significant portions of the road system are in need of repair or upgrades (World Bank, 2006). Azerbaijan has various types and capacities of transportation (table 24).

Table 24: Types and capacities of transportation

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Motor vehicles, total	925866	982553	1037626	1135936
Cars	759203	815683	871449	958594
Private cars	725843	779658	832599	916431
Buses	29985	29569	29189	29647
Lorries	117378	118460	122182	130019
Special purpose vehicles	11773	11715	10153	11936
Other (air, railway, water)	7527	7126	4653	5740
Motorcycles	1969	1643	1647	2067

Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Railway

Azerbaijan has 2,125 kilometers of rail lines, excluding several small industrial lines. Most lines are 1.520 meter broad gauge, and the principal routes are electrified (1,278km). In the 1990s, the rail system carried the vast majority of the country's freight. As with the highway system, one of the two main lines parallels the Caspian Sea coast from Russia to Iran before heading west to Turkey, and the other closely parallels Route M27 from Baku to the Georgian border. A major spur also parallels the highway to Xankandi (Jevanshir, 2009).

Map 4: Railroad of Azerbaijan



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Another smaller rail line begins just west of Baku and hugs the Iranian border to provide the only rail link to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, isolated southwest of Armenia. Passenger service from Baku to Erevan has been suspended. In 1994 passenger service from Baku to Iran also was halted.

Some improvements to the network have been made in the last few years, with EU funding, but the government estimates that 700 kilometers, or about one-third, of the rail system are in such poor condition that reconstruction is necessary. Much of the system has speed restrictions because of the poor conditions of the rails.

The network and the trains are operated by Azerbaijan State Railway (ADDY - Azərbaycan Dövlət Demir Yolu). Some investment has been made in trains recently with the consequent reflexes in the quality of services. From Baku there are train connections with Tbilisi in Georgia and Derbent in Dagestan (Russian Federation), as well as Moscow, Rostov, Kiev, Kharkiv (Ukraine), Brest (Belarus) and other major cities in the CIS. The train between Baku and Tbilisi, Georgia, is inexpensive, but it takes about 20 hours . The train stops twice at the border - long delays are routine on both sides. A luxury train also runs to Tbilisi: the "Silk Road Express", tickets start at 200 Euros, round-trip. Fares include sleeping compartments, dinner and a full breakfast in the train's restaurant car (Jevanshir, 2009).

Road

The total length of the road system of Azerbaijan extends to 57,770 km. One of the country's two main routes runs parallel the Caspian Sea coast from Russia to Iran, passing through Baku. The other, Route M27, leads west out of the capital to the Georgian border. A major branch from this route heads south through Stepanakert, capital of Nagorno-Karabakh. All major towns have a paved road connection with one of the principal routes. An extensive intercity bus service is the primary mode of intercity travel (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan Republic, 2014).

Map 5: Roads of Azerbaijan



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014).

Maintenance of the system has deteriorated since independence in 1991. Shabanov's study estimates that 60 percent of the main highways were in bad condition, resulting in excessive wear on vehicles and tires and in poor fuel consumption. Therefore 4-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended for journeys into the mountains, e.g. west of Quba. You can take buses from Baku to the major cities in Azerbaijan as well as the neighbouring countries (e.g. Derbent in Dagestan, Tehran in Iran, Istanbul in Turkey and Tbilisi in Georgia) (Shabanov, 2008).

Maritime

Ferry services operate regularly from Baku across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk) in Turkmenistan and to Bandar Anzali and Bandar Nowshar in Iran. The boats to Turkmenbashi take about 300 passengers on a 12 hour voyage and sail on average three times a week. Winter storms may disrupt these services.

Map 6: Sea roads of Azerbaijan



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2014)

Baku has not developed into a major international port because of its location on the landlocked Caspian Sea. The port serves mostly as a transshipment point for goods (primarily petroleum products and lumber) crossing the Caspian Sea and destined for places to the west, or for passenger service to ports on the eastern or southern shores of the Caspian Sea (Shabanov, 2008).

The port has seventeen berths, of which five are dedicated for transport of crude oil and petroleum products, two are used for passengers, and the remaining ten handle timber or other cargo. The port can accommodate ships up to 12,000 tons, and its facilities include portal cranes, tugboats, and equipment for handling petroleum and petroleum products. The port area has 10,000 square meters of covered storage and 28,700 square meters of open storage. Map 5, both routes are also followed by the rail system (Jevanshir, 2009).

Air

There are a total of five airports in Azerbaijan, of which three are commercial airports—in the cities of Baku, Nakchivan and Ganja. Two of them are located in

Caspian region, Haydar Aliyev International Airport and Lankaran International Airport (Table 25 and map 7). The main airport is Haydar Aliyev International Airport which is the principal gateway into Azerbaijan.

Table 25: The Public Airports of Azerbaijan

Airports	Airport Name
Baku	Haydar Aliyev International Airport
Gabala	Gabala Airport
Ganja	Ganja Airport
Lankaran	Lankaran International Airport
Nakhchivan	Nakhchivan Aiport publicmilitary
Zaqatala	Zaqatala International Airport

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Map 7: Airports in Azerbaijan



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Baku's Heydar Aliyev International Airport is the entry point for virtually all foreign travelers to the country. Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) is the national air carrier; it competes with numerous international carriers on routes from Europe and the Middle East into Caspian region.

The following map shows the routes of AZAL Airlines to the world.

Map 8: Routes of AZAL Airlines



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, (2014)

Nearly all international flights are to and from Haydar Aliyev International Airport. Less frequent routes also serve Ganja's airport, from Baku, as well as flights from Istanbul and Moscow on foreign carriers. All three airports have been renovated since 1999 (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014).

Table 26 shows the location of airports with flights to and from Baku.

Table 26: International flights to and from Baku airport

City	Country	Airport
Ankara, Antalya, Bodrum, Istanbul,	Turkey	All airports
Aktau	Kazakhstan	Aktau Airport
Astrakhan, Kazan, Krasnoyarsk, Mineralniye Vody, Perm, Rostov-on-Don, Saint Petersburg, Moscow	Russia	All Airports
Barcelona	Spain	Barcelona El Prat Airport
Beijing	China	Beijing Capital International Airport
Berlin, Frankfurt,	Germany	Berlin Tegel and Frankfurt Airport
Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan	Manas International Airport
Doha	Qatar	Hamad International Airport
Dubai	United Arab Emirates	Dubai International Airport
Geneva	Switzerland	Geneva International Airport
Prague, Karlovy Vary begins 18 July 2015	Czech Republic	Prague Václav Havel Airport, Karlovy Vary Airport[Seasonal]
Kiev	Ukraine	Boryspil International Airport
London	United Kingdom	London Heathrow Airport
Milan, Rome,	Italy	Malpensa Airport, Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport
Minsk	Belarus	Minsk International Airport
New York City	United States	John F. Kennedy International Airport
Paris	France	Charles de Gaulle Airport
Riga	Latvia	Riga International Airport
Tabriz	Iran	Tabriz International Airport
Tbilisi	Georgia	Tbilisi Airport
Tel Aviv	Israel	Ben Gurion Airport
Tehran	Iran	Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport
Vienna	Austria	Vienna International Airport

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan Republic, (2014)

Most of the locations are in European countries. There are new flights to Barcelona (as of May, 2015) and to New York (as of June, 2015)

Azerbaijan Airlines has code-share arrangements with the following airlines (as of November 2013):

Table 27: International Airlines

Air France Alitalia Austrian Airlines Belavia Hainan Airlines	Iran Air Lufthansa Pegasus Airlines Qatar Airways S7 Airlines Turkish Airlines
---------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan Republic, (2014)

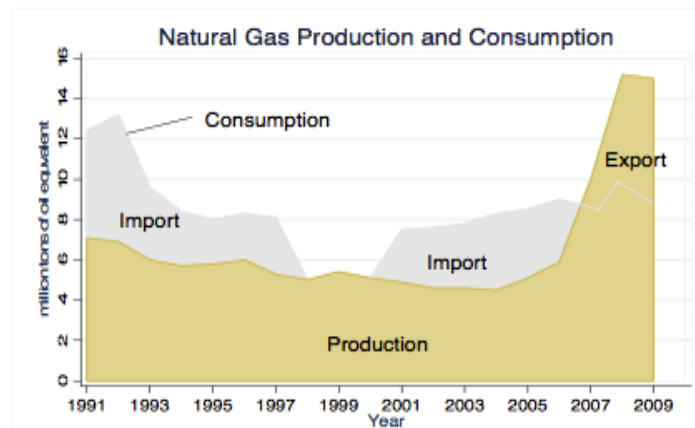
There are 11 international airlines that fly to Azerbaijan. Table 26 shows the countries, cities and airports from where these airlines fly.

5.4.2 Sources of energy

Energy availability is important for tourism development. For example, hotel energy consumption is influenced by physical and operational parameters. The physical parameters common to most buildings include size, structure and design of the building (prevailing architectural / construction practices), geographical and climatic location, the age of the facility, the type of energy and water systems installed, the way these systems are operated and maintained, types and amounts of energy and water resources available locally, as well as energy-use regulations and cost (Baker and Safarzade, 2009: 87). The author adds that operational parameters that influence energy use in hotels include operating schedules for the different functional facilities in the hotel building, the number of facilities (restaurants, kitchens, in-house laundries, swimming pools and sports centres, business centres, etc.), services offered, fluctuation in occupancy levels, variations in customer preference relevant to indoor comfort, on-site energy conservation practices, as well as culture and awareness of resource consumption among personnel and guests (p. 89).

A successful electricity and gas strategy implemented by the Azerbaijan government with the signing of the "Contract of the Century" in 1994 followed by a deal on the Shah Deniz (in Caspian region) gas field in 1996 led to an extraordinary amount of international investment flowing into the electricity and gas sector.

Figure 7: Natural Gas production and consumption



Source: IMF, Central Bank of Azerbaijan and SSCA (2013)

Azerbaijan has received \$60 billion in foreign investment in its oil, electricity and gas sector over the past 16 years (Azeri Times, 2009).

Thus, energy availability could be considered an advantage for tourism development.

5.4.3 Water supply and sewage

The water supply and sewer system in Azerbaijan is characterized by old, damaged and largely dysfunctional infrastructure and is financially constrained and poorly operated. If the centralized water supply system in the capital covered around 1.56 million people ten years ago, now this figure is 2.366 million. This can be observed in the increase of water use. Thus, the volume of water from various sources in Caspian region has increased by 23 per cent from 564 to 696 million cubic meters. The number of residents provided with an uninterrupted water supply has increased by 600,000 people and according to the latest data, amounted to 1.485 million people in 2011-2013 as a result of implementation of various projects (Haydar Aliyev Foundation, 2010).

According to “Azersu”(Azersu-the water supply and sewage company in Azerbaijan), considerable progress has been achieved in the field of construction

of new water pipelines. Around 4,280 kilometers of water supply lines was laid, 36 water receiving aggregates, 164 water reservoirs, 74 pumping stations were constructed. In addition, 175 artesian and sub-artesian wells were commissioned during the reporting period. Around 1490 kilometers of sewer lines were laid, 20 sewage pumping stations, three wastewater treatment plants were constructed, and three more have been repaired. Over 2.800.000.000.000 billion manat (2,416,170,000,000 euros) from different resources was invested in the sphere of water supply and sewerage during the reporting period (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013).

5.4.4 Communication

The telephone system in the Caspian region does not work too well, although it is being upgraded. The government, through the Ministry of Communications and Azertel controls the telephone system. An estimated 200,000 clients are awaiting in the Caspian region (2013) for the telephone installation, creating opportunities for mobile phone operators. The majority of telephones are in Caspian region and other main cities. In 2013, about 700 villages still don't have public phone service. The quality of local calls varies considerably depending on which telephone exchange is used. All long distance calls must use Azertel's lines (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013).

Cellular telephones can be purchased and used locally. Three companies share the market, Azercel-a subsidiary of Aztelecom, Bakcell (Motorola) and Narmobile. GSM coverage is still basic, but growing fast. Due to high roaming charges the best option for foreign visitors is to buy a SIM-card from one of two cellular phone operators and get local phone number. You are required to show ID since all the mobile numbers have to be registered. Top-up vouchers are also easily available. The cost of SIM card is around 8 Euros, plus a 7 Euros top-up voucher will allow around 30 minutes of talk time within Azerbaijan. Incoming calls to your mobile are free of charge (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013).

E-mail via several local internet service providers is available, as well as for public access from a number of internet cafés, accommodations, hotels. The Azeri postal system provides the basic services, but cannot be considered secure or reliable. Registering mail and packages may help the chances of letters and parcels arriving at their destination, but they will not arrive any faster. The postal code system is that of the former Soviet Union (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2013).

5.5 Sports attractions

Facilities and adequate equipment compose major attractions for sport tourism. In the Caspian region, the prominent facilities are included in table 28.

Table 28: General Sport facilities in Caspian region

Facility	Characteristics
Tofiq Bahramov Stadium, Shefa Stadium	Essentially for soccer/football matches/games and concerts.
Golf stadium	Entirely mini-golf. Meanwhile, a golf course is currently under construction.
Olimpex Star	Relatively new; ideal for athletic/track sports events.
Serhedchi-Sport complex	Used for Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Now a multi-use facility. Boasts 13 regulation volleyball courts, 10 regulation basketball courts and three regulation indoor soccer fields, along with one of the largest, state-of-the-art fitness and training facilities in the world, a high performance training centre, and an on-site sports medicine clinic. With flexible seating, the facility can accommodate up to 3,000 spectators and is fully accessible making it ideal for wheelchair and adaptive sports.
Horse ride Club	Essentially for championship and private lessons
Tennis Academy	Essentially for championship and private lessons
Mountains	Talish and Kichik Caucasus mountains have some of the best downhill and cross-country ski facilities
Ice skiing stadium	Only in Baku has ice skiing stadium , essentially for fun only

Source: Adapted from Haydar Aliyev Foundation (2010).

It is suggested that such facilities could contribute to the sports tourism development in this region. The government has organized competitions in these facilities. For example, in 2015 the European games are taking place, precisely using sports facilities identified in table 28. The contents of the same table also

suggests a considerable low number of facilities for the practice of water sports. Table 29 confirms that there are not enough water-based sports activities for motivating special interest sports tourists to visit the area.

Table 29: List of sport activities in the Caspian region

Type of sport activities in the Caspian region	sport tourism activities in Caspian region
Sailing	Fly boarding
Kitesurfing	Land windsurfing
Underwater hunting	Aerobatics
Diving	BASE jumping
Beach soccer	Bungee jumping
Jet skiing	Free flying
Fishing	Free skiing
Tubing/banana boat	Hang gliding
Wave running	Mountain biking
Powerboating	Paragliding
Parasailing	Scuba diving
Rock climbing	Skydiving
Ice climbing	Snowmobile
Hiking	Wake boarding
Quadricycle	Wave ski
Bicycle	Windsurfing
Auto racing	Wing suit flying
Paintball	Snowshoeing
Trekking	Tree climbing
Flyboard	Surfing
Rowing	Gliding
Kayaking	Ballooning
Boat racing	Stand up paddle boarding
Rowing	Body surfing
	Water skiing\ wake boarding
	Snorkeling
	Barefoot skiing
	Underwater photography
	Spearfishing
	Kite boating
	Cable skiing
	Sit-down hydrofoiling

Source: Orienteering Sporting Federation of the Azerbaijan Republic, (2012)

Currently, new sport infrastructure and Olympic Complexes are being built in

different cities and regions, such as in Baku, Lankaran, Khachmas, Neftchala, Nabran and Khudat. New kinds of sport activities will be offered to tourists in the near future. Particularly in the Caspian region, the following facilities are being built: Olympic Complexes, stadiums in Baku. Because in July, 2015 Azerbaijan will host Olympic Games in Baku. Rowing is one of the developing sports in Azerbaijan, with roots going back to the Soviet period. The Yacht Club, located in the seaside park of Baku (the Boulevard) was the first to draw youth to rowing. The increasing interest in rowing in the country necessitated commissioning of the Mingachevir Kur Rowing Olympic Center for training. It gave a further impetus to the development of rowing in Caspian region. The Azerbaijan National Rowing Federation (AMAF) is in charge of supervising this interesting sport in the country. It is a member of the International Rowing Federation (FISA) and the International Canoe Federation (ICF), the umbrella organization of national canoe organizations of the world. Azerbaijani rowers take an active part in various international competitions, European and world championships (Bayramov et al, 2011).

The progress of rowing in Azerbaijan and the quality of training for our sportsmen impressed the top representatives of the worldwide rowing sport. "The current condition of the rowing sport creates belief in a brilliant future for the Kura rowing center," President of the International Canoe Federation Jose Perurena and President of the European Canoe Association Albert Woods said. Azerbaijan encourages this sport (Aghayev, 2009).

The Kura sports center, a brand new and modern sporting village, is considered one of the finest in the world of water sports. The center is charged with bringing world rowing sport back to the Caspian Region and to become the training center of choice, not only for the national team but also by the leaders of world rowing. Domestic competitions are organized for local athletes to test their strength and prepare for world-level contests. Different championships involving rowers from a plethora of countries are held to drive the development of this sport in Azerbaijan and promote the country's capabilities in rowing (Manafov, 2015).

5.6 Summary

This chapter presents results of the demand and supply side for determining the current situation of sports tourism in the Caspian Region. A generalized profile of the sports tourist is suggested, the infrastructure, facilities and other services are identified. The next chapter proceeds with closing arguments for sports tourism in this region.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the possible contribution of this research to the study of sports tourism in the Caspian region of Azerbaijan. A review of the objectives and research questions is presented. This is followed by an examination of the findings in accordance with the research questions proposed for this study. Finally, a range of issues and questions requiring additional attention to future research are identified and discussed and recommendations put forward to facilitate future investigations.

6.2 Findings

The objectives of this study are:

Objective 1: Analyze and evaluate the existing supply of sports tourism

Objective 2: Identify the prospects for sports tourism development.

Objective 3: Propose recommendations for further research of sports tourism

Having restated the objectives of this research and drawing on the sports tourism literature in chapter two, the case study analysis in chapter 4 and results and discussion of the investigation in chapter 5, findings are presented in the form of direct answers the research questions.

RQ 1 What is the current supply of sports tourism in the Caspian Region?

As Azerbaijan (and the Caspian region) is promoted globally as an oil producing country, business travel linked to the oil industry has had high demand. Neverthe-

less, interest has been growing for other types of tourism. It is suggested that sports tourism may be one of the other types of tourism.

The results indicate that tourists arrive from neighbor countries such as Russian Federation, Turkey, Georgia, Iran and then from Europe.

Some sports tourists are active, but most are of passive nature. The active tourists use mostly water sports facilities. The passive tourists prefer to visit sports events, mostly in the Olympic complexes or stadiums.

The most part of sport tourist types visiting the Caspian region are of a sporadic nature. They are mostly interested in water sports, nature-based sports, hunting, mountain climbing, winter sports and flying attractions.

In fact, results indicate an insufficient and inadequate support infrastructure, a low supply of tourism support services like accommodation and restaurants units, the need to improve the quality of services provided (training requirements), and low supply of tourist attractions and sports facilities.

Another challenge is to diversify the supply of sports tourism. Most attention has been paid to certain types of sports, but not to water sports. There are sports complexes/facilities in different areas of the Caspian region, but a very limited number for water-based sports. The only water sports school available is for rowing. Although the school is located in Baku, its sports activities take place in Mingachavir, the Caspian region. Also, there are no professional clubs of different sport types; weak competition in sport; not organizing volunteer activities; and lack of water sport equipment shops.

RQ 2 Does the Caspian region offer market acceptable infrastructure and services for promoting sports tourism?

Services provisions are growing in the Caspian region with the construction of hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality units. This increase in infrastructure

projects is mostly likely related to the Caspian Region hosting the European Games 2015. For the future events which are will take place in Caspian region, there are plans that to franchise international brand hotels, to open more local restaurants, subway from airport to city center, the most important part is to give more attention for promoting sport tourism.

The airport in the Caspian region is situated 30 km from Baku. Shuttles and taxis are available for transfers to the Baku city area. The subway is under-construction and planned to open in 2015 for European Games 2015.

Roads to the Baku city center are in good condition taking a maximum 20 minutes for the transfer. The railroad station is located in the city center. Water-based transportation is another possibility and the harbor is located in the same vicinity as the railroad station. Nearby, tourists can find accommodation, attractions, restaurants, transportation and other facilities at their disposal.

Finally, the attractions are location in different parts of Caspian region, which are located in Baku tourists can go by public bus, by walk, by subway or by taxi or they can go by sightseeing bus, but which are located far away from the Baku they can go by taxi, by sightseeing bus. However, improved and modern facilities are being built to eventually replace existing outdated facilities for increasingly demanding tourist markets.

RQ 3 What are the challenges and perspectives for meeting the market needs of sport tourists in the Caspian region?

Evidence suggests that there is potential for the development of sports tourism in the Caspian region. For example, the sea, wind, infrastructure, climate (summer is very hot, winter is very cold) and the Olympic complex. The infrastructure is suitable for sport tourism. However, other obstacles like electricity, natural gas, communication turn the facilities inadequate by international quality and comfort

standards. It matters little if the Caspian region possesses natural resources suitable for the development of tourism, if the region is not economically developed and there is little desirable infrastructure to provide tourist with high quality service (Shabanov, 2008:45).

According to the results, a considerable number of sports activities are currently available and carried out in the Caspian region. The Ministry of Youth and Sport has been active in this regard. Furthermore, with the help of the Ministry, the different federations are working for the development of sports tourism. Still, Caspian region does not provide enough sport facilities. As such, schools, stadiums, complexes.

Results further suggest that should be given more attention for promotion of sport tourism in Caspian region. The promotion is generally weak.

6.3 Recommendations based on the findings

Some recommendations for the sports tourism product are proposed:

- Attract foreign well-known professional athletes to contribute to the promotion of sports facilities in the Caspian region. It is suggested that these athletes would place Azerbaijan and the Caspian Region on the international sports tourist map.
- Involve more of the local people in sports activities and promote the creation of sports related businesses.
- Increase the number of facilities needed to increase and thematic adaptive clubs and improve the services provided with specialists in their field.
- Pay particular attention to special needs (accessibility) of the physically inhibited and disabled people.
- Promotion of the Caspian region should be well organized and operational. Websites, brochures, books, journals, should be available channels.

- There appears to be sufficient hotel and restaurant infrastructure to supply the current demand of tourists in the region. That being said, it is clear that if the demand rises, more hotels will have to be built.
- Should be given more attention to the road and train infrastructure and a focus on ensuring road safety.
- Improve knowledge about attitudinal studies and behaviours of visitors (market research)

6.4 Limitations of the study

Even a good research may encounter problems while in the process of achieving its aim. It is up to the researchers to not allow the drawbacks to hinder their determination. Researchers look for solutions which will help them to overcome the challenges that they may face either beforehand or during the course of the research. In other words, some problems are foreseen while other challenges come as the research progresses. In carrying out this research, the following are some of the limiting factors that were encountered:

- Researcher was limited to online research. It is recognized that a questionnaire survey in the study area would probably have been more appropriate.
- Difficulties in finding suitable information/data. Even at the Ministry of Youth and Sport there were no publications or studies on sports tourism in the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan.
- It would have been better to choose as the case study only the city of Baku and not the entire Caspian region as nearly all sports facilities are located in Baku.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

As expected in all research, there are findings, issues and questions requiring additional attention to future research. In this study certain limitations have been

identified which lead to the following recommendations for future research of sports tourism in the Caspian region:

Recommendation 1: Carry out surveys in the form of questionnaires to domestic and foreign visitors in order to obtain primary data on motivation and to establish consumption patterns.

Recommendation 2. Follow-up the results of the survey questionnaire with focus group interviews with stakeholders, particularly service providers such as tour operators, hospitality managers and staff at the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

These two research techniques would allow the researcher to obtain primary data for the first time in the region and more particularly on the specific motivation of the visit—sports. As such, this approach could possibly lead to identifying more concrete findings and pinpoint areas of intervention for the continued development of sports tourism in the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan.

6.6 Summary

This chapter started by restating the objectives and research questions for this study. Afterwards, findings were established based on the results presented in chapter 5, followed by the presentation of the difficulties in carrying out the research. Finally, specific recommendations are made for further research in sports tourism.

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